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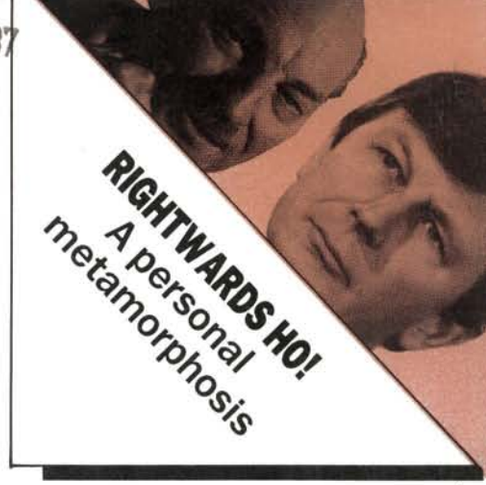
NEW STATESMAN

- The future of C4
- Ill fares the welfare
- Pearce at Blackpool
- Signs of our times
- Williamson on gay cinema
- Lumsden on Wilde



RIGHTWARDS HO!
A personal metamorphosis

AFTER BLACKPOOL

FOUR MORE YEARS

Cover illustration: David Hine

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NEW STATESMAN

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NEXT WEEK

David Selbourne on the left; Charles Grant on Nigeria; Edmund White interviews Spain's leading novelist Juan Goytisolo (left)

Selective opposition

IN INSISTING that the theme of their conference was 'Action for the third term', the Conservatives have set out a programme which, in intention, is more radical than in any of the previous two parliaments. This time, the core legacies of the social democratic state are in their sights — in education, local government, housing, health and social services. That there should also be another trade union bill in the programme as well seems almost like an afterthought.

This presents the opposition — which for now means Labour, since the Alliance will be in no shape to do anything else but bleat feebly until the middle of next year — with both a headache and a stimulant.

The headache is that the government has the power, and a largely untrammelled one at that, to take on a series of tasks which badly need doing. The inexorable ageing of our population, the growth of one-parent families and the still unknown dimensions of the Aids crisis will put our health and social security systems under the kind of strain from which no government could protect them, unless it could create a consensus in favour of higher public spending, which means higher taxation. No such consensus is now available, and would not be instantly available to Labour.

Like the health service, state schools presently attract widespread grumbling and dissatisfaction, especially from those who depend on them most and for whom public services can do most. As more and more of the middle classes take the private education option ('simply no alternative'), the consequent frustration of those who see their children's chances thereby decreased will grow: any government which can convincingly promise reform and convincingly identify obstacles to change is likely to get a fair wind for a bit.

So too in local government, where the services in many cities are neither so efficiently nor so courteously delivered as to inspire natural mass support. It will be more likely that the principle of local democracy finds allies when it is attacked by government when the purpose of local democracy for most people — the delivery of services — is seen to work better than any conceivable alternative.

Insofar as the measures rapturously confirmed at Blackpool address, or are seen to address, real fears and real problems, they will succeed in bolstering Conservative rule and be largely impervious to Labour attack.

But there lies the stimulant. For the very radicalism of the programme means it is high risk politically, because it can exact a high price socially.

The poll tax is the first, obvious example: indeed the example is *so* obvious that it will be safe to assume that Michael Howard, the local government minister, is likely to shape the legislation so that it avoids too much upset of his own supporters at least. However, a flat rate tax will be inherently discriminatory unless it is replaced with something different entirely: and if it is not, it offers the best opportunity for years for highlighting the inequity of the government.

In education, the task is to reach and educate the majority of children who pass through schools to work or 'training' in their teens; who appear to have little motivation or desire for further education; and who often benefit little from the years they have had. It is the enormous challenge of providing an education for the mass of people at a standard which will approach that of the private schools — the original ambition of the comprehensives, rarely realised.

The left has the best of reasons to push for the best of educations for the mass, to expose the divisions which a growing private sector and 'public sector' opting out will accentuate. If that attack is based on a perceived determination to do *better* on standards than the government, it will attract support.

In all of these areas, the care with which Labour can discriminate between necessary changes and inegalitarian measures will be an index of how far the policy review is producing a revival in its policies. The largest shift of ground which Labour has to take into account is that it must now argue for its collectivist tradition most of all in terms of service and efficiency — for it is only if collectively provided services *do* serve that they will retain support.

The most important leap Labour has to make in its efforts to land up ahead of 'Thatcherism' is that which puts it in the van of those demanding more and better services for a larger and larger number or people — and demanding that they have a larger and larger say in what their shape and provision will be.

In that way, Labour has a chance of using this third Tory term to see an upturn in its fortunes, not merely a confirmation of the rule of the Conservatives. There is scope, plenty of scope, for real and vigorous opposition — as long as the opposition is a discriminating one, and one which is manifestly based on realisable principles and practices of its own. Then the opposition can again become the government in waiting the country needs.

John Lloyd

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DIARY

Washington

AND THEN THERE were six. With the withdrawal of Democrat Congresswoman Mrs Pat 'Crybaby' Schroeder and Senator Joe 'Copycat' Biden from the Democrats' Presidential race, we are down from 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' to a mere half dozen in the lists.

More and more, the 'Grand National with no favourites', as historian Marcus Cunliffe calls the 1988 US presidential election, is turning into a bad Agatha Christie rather than a race. Whose turn will it be to drop dead next, the knife still glistening between their shoulder blades? Soon we will be turning on the morning radio with uncustomary glee, eager to find out whose little figurine lies smashed upon the media's breakfast table today. First Gary Hart. Then Joe Biden. And Boo-hoo Schroeder. To say nothing of the non-candidates like Sam Nunn and Mario Cuomo. Mike Dukakis next? When does Reverend Jesse Jackson's bubble burst?

○

The news that it was Massachusetts governor and frontrunning candidate Michael Dukakis whose aides leaked the Neil Kinnock video to Miss Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times* may put him on the ropes, but not out of the race. A recent poll of Capitol Hill aides gave him a whopping 48 per cent lead over Jackson. But he has since had to throw his two best pros Paul Tully and John Sasso off the troika for leaking the tape.

Reverend Jesse Jackson was also reeling last week, when three of his backers pulled out in Los Angeles after watching him give a tongue-lashing to the young black who queried him on the ever-so-touchy subject of Jackson and the Jews. 'And do you know what the Jews are doing in South Africa?' Jackson retorted hotly, splicing the Democrat ethnic vote for the second time, and as disastrously.

○

Small wonder New York Governor Mario Cuomo and Georgia's Sam Nunn keep saying over and over they are out of it, if stories about the Cuomo dynasty and Nunn's innate sanity are even a fraction true. Ipso facto, people are beginning to think, there must surely be a fatal flaw of masochism and madness in anyone who actually wants to run for President? In the current system only mad fantasy victims who are also virtuous bores with a lot of money, nothing to say, no sex life, no vices and no need for sleep can win.

This may — conversely — leave a yawning gap wide open in a month or so for the colourful, drinking, gambling and unapologetic fornicator who steps in around December, complete with mob connections, to save us from sleeping through the whole process of winding up with President George Bush (the favoured choice of 50.9 per cent of Capitol Hill aides, believe it or not). If you think this is a hint, yes it is. A lot of people at this stage would just do anything to drag Mario Cuomo or Bill Bradley or Sam Nunn in to save the day. Meanwhile most Americans are still having trouble sorting out one declared candidate from the other.

○

The problem is that they all sound alike, and also like a cure for insomnia. Here are extracts from their speeches. Paul Simon (Democrat Senator for Illinois): 'We need economic development. We need job development. Education must be a higher priority . . . There's no reason why all Americans shouldn't have housing . . . I visited a family that lives near a hazardous waste dump and they were growing strawberries. I asked myself: what's in those strawberries? I don't know.' Thumps rostrum. 'Who are these guys?'

And from Al Gore (Democrat Senator for Tennessee): 'We need leadership. Everything must be discussed. I used to be in the home-building business and I have a great joy out of seeing young people own their first home . . . We need leadership. We need a sense of national goals.'

Here is Arizona's pride, Governor Bruce Babbitt: 'The key is people in the cities. We have to set priorities.' And Reverend Jesse Jackson: 'We have to stop drugs from coming in and jobs from going out. We need a better Coast Guard.' Mike Dukakis: 'All of us talk about partnerships but I'm probably the only one who has really created a partnership.' This is Richard Gephardt, Missouri Congressman: 'I was born in a city. I live on a city block. What Shakespeare said is really true. What is a city but its people? I believe in cities.'

○

See what I mean? All week you could smell the burning rubber while the tired old journos of Capitol Hill tried to work out a handy headline. The Six Proud Walkers? The Gang of Six? Or just good old 'Joe Sixpack', which is the American equivalent of 'Joe Soap' by the by. It does not quite have that Disneyland Zing, but only Mrs Hattie Babbitt seems to have felt warmly about the 'Seven Dwarfs' epithet, calling herself 'one of the seven fabulous dwarfettes' to the horror of the other aspiring First Ladies.

'Why not "The Seven Wonders of the World?"' Babbitt's press secretary once moaned. 'Why dwarves?' Why indeed? It should perhaps be stressed that all seven are taller than me, and I'm no potted plant, as Colonel North's lawyer once said. What shrank them in the public eye was their tendency to agree upon everything in order to avoid offending anyone.

But for remaining presidential hopefuls Dukakis, Jackson, Gephardt, Simon, Babbitt and Gore the day may yet come when they look back upon their time as six parts of the 'Seven Dwarfs' nostalgically. Who knows what kind of mud is about to be slung, now that it is no longer enough to wear a dark blue suit and push for higher taxes, denounce lying in government and say you are against all wars?

We have the 'Famous Five' ahead of us. And then the 'Four Gospel-Makers', or maybe a barbershop quartet. Dukakis can give them middle C. Simon will pick up the bass while Jackson takes descant and in no time they'll be crooning the Yale University 'Whiffenpoofs Song' in an effort to win the Ivy League vote. But, crunch, another figurine will bite the dust and we'll be down to just three. The Three Amigos? The Three Stooges? The Three Degrees with 'You've really got a hold on me?' or just 'Jesse and the Rockettes?'

○

When Mrs Pat Shroeder renounced her stab at becoming a Democrat candidate, she disappointed many. But not by bursting into tears as she uttered the emotive words 'I'd love to be running but I haven't figured it out yet.'

As one who admired the lady who invented the phrase 'Teflon presidency' I was saddened to see her cracking up with the new American election practice of 'the strategic sob'. When Ed Muskie was thought to be shedding a quiet tear because his wife had indiscreetly told a dirty joke on the campaign bus, it cost him the candidacy. These days he could cry — should cry, indeed — but his wife would still have to shut up.

Not only is it okay to cry these days, to show you are a reconstructed male who is not afraid to secrete emotion. But if you are running for President, or not running as the case might be, you have to squeeze out a manly sob in order to win over the electorate on the famous 'character' issues. So far all Dukakis ever got choked up about was wife Kitty giving up her dieting pills. But no doubt we will soon all be surrounded by the Sobbing Sixpack. Or the Lacrimose Five. Or the Weepy Four. Or the Bawling Threesome.

I tell you, these presidential candidates have no shame. They'll do anything to win.

Elgy Gillespie

ROGER WODDIS

Wish you were here

Walking taller than the Tower;
Oh, it's been great to celebrate
A triple-turn in power,
And hard to wait till Friday
When the Saviour wins our cheers —
There are glorious, Torious times ahead
For another thousand years!

It's been a revolution
(Not the kind that makes you wince);
Though red's a tinge from which you cringe,
We're still the old blue rinse.
The spoils are to the victor,
The loser gets sod-all —
There are glorious, Torious times ahead,
And we're going to have a ball!

So hang the Opposition,
Who look sick as we advance;
They know the game, they'd do the same
If they had a half a chance.
Our faith is in Greed Britain,
We have reason to rejoice —
There are glorious, Torious times ahead,
Pocketing, rocketing times ahead,
Glorious, Torious times ahead
For those who have a choice.

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Papal metaphysics

I WONDER if a pious unbeliever, who has been browsing reverently among the medievals, may take issue with the Pope's appeal in New Orleans for greater emphasis on metaphysics. I was charmed by it and felt myself back in the twelfth century's University of Paris.

But the Pope's message also reminded me of an encounter here several years ago with Ivan Illich, that dazzling medieval-style dialectian, in one of his visits here from Mexico. He suggested — and I can hardly believe it, even as I repeat it — that one way to deal with the problem of hunger in the Third World was to change the definition of hunger. I brashly asked Father Illich whether he had ever tested out this theory on a hungry Mexican peasant. He brushed the question aside as irrelevant and ignorant. From his loftier metaphysical perspective, the validity of a dialectical proposition does not depend on empirical tests but on whether it contains internal contradictions. If not, then that hungry peon was suffering not so much from malnutrition as from a grave deficiency in logic.

Of course it would be unfair to attribute any such syllogism to this Pope, who has often demonstrated his sympathy with the oppressed everywhere. But it does show where an undue emphasis on metaphysics can lead even as compassionate a Catholic theologian as Illich.

The Pope, who taught philosophy in Poland before he became a bishop, not only stressed greater emphasis on metaphysics in Catholic schools but its stricter supervision by ecclesiastical authorities. Those, even bishops, are not necessarily infallible, as some of the most brilliant medieval philosophers learned to their sorrow. Like them, our own resident heretic Father Charles Curran was barred from teaching theology at Catholic University and exiled to secular Cornell University because his views, like Roscelin's and Abelard's, annoyed the hierarchy.

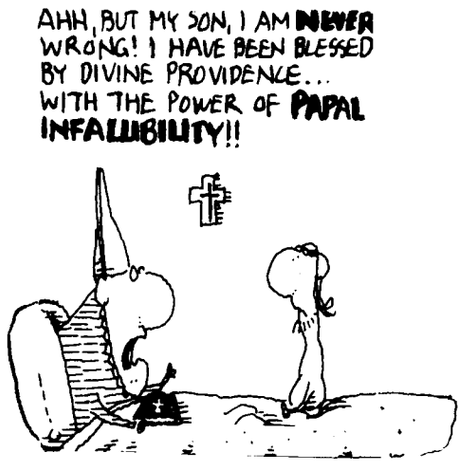
The Pope in his homily laid equal stress on the teaching of the Gospels. It seems time to recall again that this is not always compatible or even on speaking terms with metaphysics. Indeed it is hard to find metaphysics in the Gospels.

St Jerome, who gave the church its Latin Bible and expressed the humble and antimetaphysical side of the faith, once asked in a commentary on Galatians, 'Who reads Plato and Aristotle any more?' He replied, 'Only a few old men in corners,' and then added in a proud reference to the first Disciples, 'but our rustics and our fishermen — the whole world resounds with their wisdom!'

Indeed, the simple truths preached in the Gospels by and for humble men, like those preached by the Hebrew prophets before them, are more urgently relevant to humanity's survival than ever. As much cannot be said of metaphysics, of which they were wholly ignorant.

Even the invocation of the Greek philosophical term 'logos' at the beginning of the fourth Gospel is not as metaphysical as it looks. A simple test will show why. A Greek pagan translating the term by the meaning it had acquired three centuries earlier in philosophy would have translated John as saying, 'In the beginning was reason,' and identified the logos or reason with God, Stoic style, the immanent source of order in the universe. But to the Christian as to the Jew of that time the term 'logos' was only a Hellenised echo of Genesis — logos was not 'reason' but the Word by which God had created the heavens and the earth, a metaphor of theology, not metaphysics.

Christianity got its metaphysics not from the Bible and the Jews but from the pagan philosophers and the Greeks long after the New Testament was written. Then it appeared in efforts to rationalise Christian mysteries: the Trinity, the Eucharist, the virgin birth and original sin, doctrines crystallised long after the Gospels and not relevant to their ethical teaching. Even in the



heyday of Catholic dialectics, millions lived and died, in piety and mutual kindness, blissfully ignorant of the fierce disputes and heresy hunts metaphysics had ignited amid the learned but often contumacious few. It is doubtful whether any of the humble were barred at the Pearly Gates because they could not explain whether the Trinity was One in Three or Three in One. It is also doubtful that God — if there is one — was as impressed as we intellectuals are by St Anselm's brilliant ontological proof of his existence.

It is not by renewal of metaphysics that the church since John XXIII has gained new respect but by applying Gospel teaching freshly to the particular anxieties of the various oppressed. Those cannot be appeased by sterile dogmatisms cemented in a subservient metaphysics, policed by ecclesiastical authority.

Metaphysics and theology have their place of honour in the curriculum amid the rest of the human heritage, but not as sources of oppression, as in the Middle Ages, or in Tehran today, nor as urged by other Khomeinis on the fundamentalist fringes of Judaism and Christianity as well as Islam. This Pope is too humane and enlightened to be counted among them, but a certain convergence is disturbing. The Pope's distaste for dissent was made explicit when he met the American bishops.

I. F. Stone

Reprinted from the New York Nation.

Sudan: biting the hand

THE KHARTOUM government's decision to expel three overseas aid agencies, officially confirmed last month, has caused more surprise and dismay in the West than in the Sudan. The expulsion of two US-based Christian bodies, World Vision International and the Association of Christian Resource Organisations Serving Sudan (ACROSS), plus the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), has been represented as an attack by Muslim fundamentalists. It is a line guaranteed to appeal to Western emotions, particularly as Iranian idiosyncracies continue to hit the headlines. The reality is more complex: and raises serious questions about aid to the Third World.

At one level, the decision reflects the confusion reigning in the Sudan since the collapse of El Sadiq el Mahdi's bickering coalition in August. Virtually since it took office in May 1986, the elected government has been under fire from every quarter for its failure to tackle the burning issues of a disintegrating economy and a brutal Southern war.

The move against the agencies is one of its most assertive actions to date. It will be far from unpopular: most Northerners, still not directly affected by a far-flung conflict they do not understand, are naturally ready to suspect foreigners venturing into the war-torn South. 'They are all spies' is a remark heard even from educated liberals.

The extent and violence of the conflict is kept hidden as far as possible from Northern opinion. So is the extent of the famine, which has forced hundreds of thousands of ordinary Southerners to seek food aid. Relief is the main work of the few overseas agencies in the South. World Vision had recently succeeded in transporting several hundred tonnes of grain into the hungry town of Wau, capital of Bahr el Ghazal — an achievement praised even by the many aid workers who criticise the agency's high-profile, low-sensitivity approach. Meanwhile, the low-profile, Swiss-based Lutherans were trapped in local politics in Malakal, the besieged government-held capital of the rebel heartland of Upper Nile. The town, with around 100,000 refugees trebling its 'normal' population, has been cut off since the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) shot down a relief plane in May. Among the estimated 13 people killed was a senior Sudanese LWF official.

ACROSS, previously expelled from famine-stricken, Muslim Darfur when accused of proselytising, had four expatriate workers kidnapped, and later released, by the SPLA this summer. These sagas say something about the political — not to mention physical — dangers of trying to feed a hungry South.

Yet beyond the usual dilemmas of providing aid in a situation of war lie deeper problems of the whole practice and, indeed, philosophy, of aid. Khartoum's decision will be acceptable to many Northerners not simply because of their fears over the war but, more significantly, because of a widespread resentment of aid agencies in general.

It is a feeling born during the 1984-5 famine in the North, which coincided with the popular uprising that overthrew Nimeiri, dictator of 16 long years. A sense of helplessness and shame over the famine grew steadily as around 90 aid agencies swamped the country. Backpack travellers were recruited by even the most reputable agencies, overwhelmed by the magnitude of the drought disaster. Bizarrely-attired youngsters could be seen issuing orders to experienced Sudanese civil servants. Not surprisingly, this fuelled the sense of national assertiveness and rediscovered dignity

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which had been liberated by a democracy fought for on the streets.

Most agency staff still seem blithely unaware of the unpopular, 'can do' image they have fashioned for themselves. Or of the resentment provoked by a lack of local involvement in project implementation, let alone conception or planning. There is little sign of questioning the reality of 'aid from above' which has produced aid fatigue not only in the Sudan but throughout the Third World.

Gillian Lusk

Gillian Lusk is deputy editor of Africa Confidential.

Can't pay, won't get

HIDDEN IN the forthcoming poll tax Bill will be an obscure clause which subtly shifts the presumption that local authority services are provided free at the point of delivery. At the moment, councils can only levy a charge if a specific Act of Parliament permits it. The new clause, which was trailed in a written Parliamentary Answer just before the summer break, will give the government power to let local authorities charge for services. It will also give the government power to lay down those services for which authorities must charge, and the level of charges. Extending or prescribing charging would in future need to be authorised only by Statutory Instrument - the sort of legislation that gets one and a half hours scrutiny in Parliament after ten o'clock at night.

The government has said that only four local services will be outside the scope of this legislation — policing, fire fighting, school education and elections. School education is, of course, the subject of a separate attempt by Kenneth Baker to legalise charging for 'extras'.

The government has already given notice that it intends to use the new powers in the field of local authority leisure and recreation. By a combination of the Privatisation Bill and these, so far unremarked, charging powers, local authorities could be forced to put out to tender the running of anything from seaside donkeys to sports centres. Even if the job stays in-house, councils could be prevented from providing the facilities at anything other than full cost - except for schools or those with a passport from the DHSS to prove they're on income support. Charging needn't stop there. Library services, especially those other than for the lending of books, could be subject to the same treatment. Turnstiles at the reference library, or a meter on the reference librarian? Tolls on roads could be legalised by subordinate legislation if the government gets its new clause through.

Ironically, all of this could actually help to defuse the row the government is going to have over poll tax. First, a combination of compulsory charging, minimal local education, schools going out of council funding, stopping rents being subsidised by the rates, rate-capping and later poll tax capping will mean lower poll tax bills - but at the expense of local services.

Second, the government will head off one objection to poll tax that so far has received little attention. A heavy criticism of rates is exemplified by the widow living next door, in an identical house, to four wage earners. It is claimed to be unfair that both households pay the same in rates. But the community *charge* will raise expectations of a new sort of 'fairness' and will generate its own clichés of unfairness. The four wage earners are likely to say they make little or no use of local authority services - certainly far less, say, than a single parent with four children. Why, they will argue, should we pay for services we don't use?

Nicholas Ridley agrees with them. Poll tax, or community charge, will fund the bare minimum of council services. For anything other than the minimum, if you can't pay the charge, you won't get it.

Martin Pilgrim

Licence to kill

DURING the demolition of one giant South Yorkshire power station the management knew that asbestos was in the atmosphere and that the workers were being contaminated. 'But it was the cheapest way to do the job and that's how they made us do it,' says Harry Jones.

Jones, a demolition worker, started on the Rotherham power station in 1982. 'I was stripping asbestos with choppers, petrol-engined saws and after we chopped it down we used to hose it from the top to the bottom of the building,' he says.

Earlier this year his employers, Ralph Dean and Lawrence Romani, were prosecuted under the Health and Safety Act, but Harry Jones didn't give evidence, neither did any of his workmates. Now some of them have spoken out in a Yorkshire Television report on the effectiveness of regulations designed to police asbestos removal.

The programme provides a glimpse into the shadowy world of casual labour, where men desperate for work are afraid to complain. 'There's very little work for people without qualifications, so we have to take what we can get from people like Mr Romani. It's cash in the hand and no questions asked,' says Jones.

Five years ago harrowing pictures of former asbestos workers dying from cancer in another YTV film, 'Alice, A Fight For Life', made everyone aware that inhaling only a few tiny fibres of asbestos can lead to a slow and painful death. It was manufacturing asbestos that killed Alice Jefferson; today those who strip it out are at risk.

Concern about the health risks of asbestos has created a £100 million-a-year asbestos removal industry. It includes companies that previously manufactured and supplied the deadly substance. But unless the companies that carry out this work take strict precautions by screening off the area and providing breathing apparatus, protective clothing and decontamination facilities, they not only risk the health of their workers, but anyone else in the vicinity.

A system of licensing regulations introduced in 1984 was intended to control those who carry out the work and ensure safe removal. But a former factory inspector Martin Allan says it's about as effective as the dog licensing system. There's not enough control over the issue of licences and too few inspectors to monitor the sites where work is carried out. Only 25 per cent of sites are inspected and of the 2,000 licences, Health and Safety Executive figures show that only *four* have been revoked in the last three years. The National Health and Safety Officer for the GMB general union, David Gee, feels the system is wide open to abuse. Of the 2,000 companies with licences to remove asbestos, he says, '90 per cent are cowboys and incompetent.'

His view gets unlikely support from Thompson Laboratories, whose six-month survey of licensed contractors showed that 95 per cent of sites inspected failed tests to discover if they were airtight.

The Health and Safety Executive brought a prosecution in April this year against three companies and the men running them for failing to protect workers against exposure to asbestos during the demolition of Rotherham and Mexborough power stations in South Yorkshire. All the companies were found guilty at Leeds Crown Court and fined £18,000. But they had already been wound up.

One of the bosses, Ralph Dean, was given an 18-month suspended prison sentence, for health and safety breaches at both power stations. His associate, Lawrence Romani, was fined for an offence at Rotherham, but although the named safety officer at Mexborough, he was found not guilty of the offences at that power station.

None of the workers gave evidence in court, yet according to those tracked down by YTV there were no safety standards at all. 'I can't understand why Lawrence got a licence to strip asbestos, because we got no safety clothing or masks or anything to strip it with,' says Chris Wright, one of the metal cutters who worked at Rotherham and Mexborough power stations. 'The workers were stripping asbestos with still saws and clouds of asbestos contaminated the atmosphere. There were just mountains of it flying about, coming down like snow,' he says.

The Health and Safety Inspectors' site visits were treated with derision. When they arrived some men would put on respirators while others would run and hide. If the job was shut down they'd start it up again as soon as the inspectors had left the site. One inspector who visited the Mexborough site noted that the decontamination facilities installed on the site were used to house a dog and, according to the workers, they weren't allowed to use it. 'It were just a joke, it were there for show,' says Chris Wright.

The companies kept 'Mickey Mouse' lists of workers with the result that the HSE were only able to trace three of those who worked on the sites. They estimate that at least another 20 are at risk of contracting cancer during the next 25 years, and their wives and children could also be in danger if they have inhaled asbestos dust from workclothes.

David Gee was dismayed by the working conditions reported by the men. 'Part of Victorian life was you had some very hard choices to make between earning a crust of bread and a high risk of getting killed while doing it. That ought not to be the case in 1987,' he said. He has warned the government repeatedly that the licensing system is inadequate. 'We said this is going to be a licence to kill and that's exactly what it's turning out to be.'

Gary Horne and Peter Moore

The authors worked on the programme 'Strippers', which will be shown on Channel 4's new series What On Earth Is Going On? *on Sunday 11 October at 7.15pm.*

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A turn for the worse

AS THE shadow cabinet meets this week to begin the review of Labour's policies, analysis of the most recent public opinion soundings will give pause to Labour leaders, reactionaries and revisionists alike. As the table shows, an improving picture of the public's view as to which party has the best policy on key issues over several elections has, since the June 1987 defeat, taken a turn for the worse.

TABLE 1: BEST POLICY

Q: 'Which party has the best policy on (each problem)?'

	Conservative lead			
	May 1979	June 1983	June 1987	NOW
Defence		+34	+26	+36
Law & Order	+39	+31	+18	+36
Education		+8	−3	+1
Unemployment	+6	−4	−5	−1

The 5 per cent Labour lead over the Tories on unemployment at the election has been cut to 1 per cent now, the Labour lead of 5 per cent on housing has been cut to nil; a Labour lead of 3 per cent on education is now a Tory lead of 1 per cent, and massive Tory leads on law and order and defence have widened even further.

The MORI poll, taken face-to-face among 1,864 adults 18+ in 170 constituencies across Britain, was conducted 24-30 September, including the first three days of the Labour conference, on behalf of the *Sunday Times*.

The uniform unpopularity of Labour's defence policy is measured not only by the three-to-one (53 per cent to 17 per cent) support for the Conservatives' policy on defence but by substantial leads for the Conservatives among nearly every group in the population: see table 2.

TABLE 2: THE DEFENCE DEBATE

Q: 'Which party has the best policy on defence?'

	Con %	Lab %	Allce %	Con lead %
All	53	17	7	+36
Men	58	19	7	+39
Women	48	16	7	+32
18-34	50	20	8	+30
35-54	57	17	8	+40
55+	52	15	6	+37
ABC1	62	14	8	+48
C2DE	47	20	7	+27
North	47	23	7	+24
Mids	51	19	8	+32
South	60	12	8	+48
TU	49	24	9	+25

Don't knows omitted

Even among *Mirror* readers, the Tories' defence policy enjoys a 20 per cent lead; only among *Guardian* readers is Labour's defence policy preferred, by 11 percentage points. In fact, one in four Labour supporters (24 per cent) say they believe the Tories' defence policy is best.

Other key issues measured included unemployment (63 per cent rate it an important issue), law and order (20 per cent), education (16 per cent), housing (9 per cent) and inner cities (3 per cent). Table 3 provides a 'gap analysis', useful for understanding among which subgroup Labour's doing best and worst, by each issue.

The Regional Gap, the North including Scotland vs the South, is the most consistent, with only a 7 per cent difference, Labour doing badly on all issues among people living in the South.

TABLE 3: ISSUE GAP ANALYSIS

	Unemployment %	Law & Order %	Defence %	Education %	Housing %	Inner Cities %
Gender Gap (Women, favouring Conservatives)	+6	−1	−7	+7	+3	+9
Age Gap (55+, favouring Conservatives)	+3	−4	+7	+13	+4	+12
Class Gap (Middle, favouring Conservatives)	+26	+17	+21	+29	+29	+19
North-South Gap (South, favouring Conservatives)	+30	+24	+24	+30	+27	+23

Surprisingly, the Conservative lead on law and order, substantial across all groups, is even stronger among younger people aged 18-34 than those over 55. Other surprises include a stronger Tory lead among men than women on law and order and defence and that the class gap on law and order is weakest, reflecting the widespread concern among working-class people on this issue and their relatively low confidence in Labour policies on law and order.

Four Labour supporters in a hundred favour the Tory policy on unemployment, 7 per cent their policy on education, 8 per cent on housing and over a quarter, 27 per cent, of Labour supporters say the Tory policy on law and order is best.

One disturbing finding for Labour is that among the unemployed, 24 per cent think the Conservatives' policy on unemployment is best. Better news for Labour is that among those to whom the issues are most salient, Labour's policies are preferred in the areas of unemployment (Labour lead of 8 per cent), inner cities (Labour lead of 12 per cent) and housing (Labour lead of 29 per cent).

Why is Labour doing worse now than at the general election on most issues? There are three points suggested by the figures:

1. On law and order specifically, the Tories are doing much better (up 7 per cent, from 43 per cent to 50 per cent), and Labour worse (down 11 per cent, from 25 per cent to 14 per cent).
2. On all issues, there is confusion among former Alliance supporters. The belief that the Alliance had the best policies ranged from 15 per cent (law and order and housing) to 21 per cent (education) at the time of the election; confidence in the wisdom of Alliance policies has now dwindled to between 4 per cent and 7 per cent.
3. The undecideds have more or less doubled since the election, from 15 per cent to 26 per cent on unemployment and from 9 per cent to 22 per cent on defence. It is these heretofore decided potential recruits to Labour's policies that should be exercising the minds of any Labour decision-maker who looks over his (or her) shoulder to see what the public is thinking. Once again, it's one thing to sell policies like dog food; nobody should think a political party should depart from its principles to determine its policies. It must be said however that to design a dog food that the dog just won't eat is a no-sale proposition.

The size of the job to be done in the policy area, never mind the party and leader image dimensions of the 'political triangle', is indicated by the fact that even if *all* of those who now say they are undecided on which party is best on law and order and defence could be won over, the Tories' policies would still lead on these issues.

Robert Worcester

The author is Chairman of MORI

If the caption fits

No. 38

If you were the King of Spain and were visiting California for the first time, what famous and imposing landmark would you ask to be given a guided tour around? Yes, the still-handsome Mayor of Carmel. Wonder what the joke was. Captions, thinks or speech bubbles to reach us at the *NS* by Monday 19 October. Ten-pound book token for the winner.

No. 36 winner

Sir Ralph Halpern: 'To make her smile I just have to move this little lever here . . .' (*Katie Mallett, Canvey Island.*) Runner up: Sir Ralph and Lady Halpern (in unison): 'The Wright affair? Sorry, we haven't read *Spycatcher* yet.' (*Ron Rubin, London.*)

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Reconciliation on the isthmus

WAR WEARINESS has replaced both revolution and President Reagan's desire to overthrow the elected government of Nicaragua as the principal political dynamic in Central America. The immense desire for peace crystallised and became tangible on 7 August in Guatemala, where the Central American presidents threw out Washington's plans to turn the screw further against the Sandinista government and voted in their own project the conciliatory 'Arias' plan.

This weekend even those two most intractable enemies, the US-backed government and forces of El Salvador and the left-wing insurgents, are planning to sit down to talk.

The extreme right-wingers in El Salvador who were only a year ago talking about the annihilation of all communists and liberals have realised that that objective is unobtainable and that the economy they dominate is sinking under them faster than ever.

At the same time, on the left, the Cubans are telling the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front that the time has come to talk. The Farabundo Marti, whose fierce political commitment to revolution has always made the Nicaraguan Sandinistas look like Boy Scouts, even seem to be listening. Both sides are now supposed to be sitting down in San Salvador to try and talk peace.

In Managua the Nicaraguan government is wisely doing all it possibly can to prove its commitment to the peace process: amnesty has been declared for the terrorists; *La Prensa*, the *contras*' friend has been allowed to reopen; the Catholic radio has been freed and people have been drifting back to the country from exile in Honduras.

The question now is to what extent Washington will allow the dynamic for peace to take its course without further provocation and sabotage. President Jose Azcona, the closest ally of the US in the isthmus, has announced publicly that Honduras will not appoint the 'reconciliation commission' that the Guatemala accord demands and has thus signalled that his country still hews to Washington's military line.

(Even peaceful Costa Rica which will not necessarily need a reconciliation commission, has appointed one.)

Will the Reagan administration go further and block the help the United Nations are offering the Central Americans? Will *La Prensa* as it reopens start printing the sort of wild pro-*contra* falsehoods that will madden the Sandinistas into closing it down again? Will some anti-government notable in Managua be killed by some mysterious assassin and the Sandinistas blamed?

The future of the isthmus is still wobbling on a knife edge. Its immediate fate may depend on — or indeed may already have been settled by — some tacit understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union of the sort reached a quarter of a century ago by the two powers over Cuba. Moscow won't threaten US territory from Central America as long as Washington stops trying to turn the clock back to the good old days of Somoza.

Hugh O'Shaughnessy

POLITICAL SKETCH

The deviation of giving people what they want

Edward Pearce

THIS LAST excursion to Brighton was not a conference to linger on. It started quiet and ended ranting. Something returned in the defence debate of the two-camp war which the chocolate box rose was intended to obscure.

Oscar Wilde described religions as being like a perfume; in which case Labour conference must be the sweetest-smelling gathering on earth. For the bulk of the floor this was the occasion for avowals and affirmations, hallelujahs and hosannas. It is difficult for a non-unilateralist case even to be put. It is perceived as a blasphemy and hissed before it can be argued. Bill Jordan with a factual case was welcomed with a shout of 'CIA'. For the most part people just came to the pulpit steps and declared themselves for Jesus.

In this atmosphere the leadership is attempting to make the long adjustment of its defence posture — necessary if it is not to be stamped on in the next election — and is sending out little coded messages that by means of the Trident installation which can be subsumed into multilateral disarmament and a judicious use of the timetable on US bases, it may, in a couple of years' time, be less unilateralist than it looks. There is some competition here for the mantle of Harold Wilson — a horse blanket of four-faced equivocation if ever there was one. I can't see Norman Tebbit would want to give up politics when there are such sweet things around to kick.

Conference existed in one world, real life in another, while the leadership has been trying an interplanetary straddle which could leave it space-walking for ever. Take shares and the worker. Bryan Gould, who did not have a good conference, had to meet *en face* a conference which had agreed on the correct slogan for rejecting Gouldism as spittle on the beard of the Prophet. He was denounced for 'courting the yuppies'. Bless you my dears, the yuppies are on their second Volvo and finding David Owen dangerously left of centre. What Gouldism is about is courting the employed working class who have stopped voting Labour. *Not* courting them is Labour's way of being nice to Mrs Thatcher.

Now Gould has magnificent gifts; his rational, humane sophisticate's approach could lay salve upon Labour's wounds as far as the public is concerned. Accordingly a genuine gratitude exists, especially in the unions, that there is someone with the art of proclaiming Labour's most attractive qualities on screen. But that doesn't get you through conference.

And for once Gould, professional communicator though he is, made an error of rhetoric. He didn't assert share ownership as a fact of life somewhere above a state of sin. He slipped, Wilson-wise, into calling it 'socialist' which it isn't. He also made a plea for worker share ownership which is fine in itself so long as you don't set it up as the hottest thing since Madonna's last album. It happens to represent the advanced thinking of Cyril Smith — the sort of employer's friendly deal with his workforce which Labour has traditionally dismissed as 'sweethearting the workers'. It is just the sort of thing Eric Hammond might negotiate for his members — moral death!

YET IT WAS singularly depressing to hear musty rhetoricians at the tribune declaring that Labour's duty was to the old, the sick and the unemployed — not to the rising and aspiring classes. The pre-condition of Labour ever again doing anything for the bottom of the heap is that it should get enough votes from other bits of that heap. Kenneth Baker spoke scornfully on BBC *Question Time* about the awful opportunism of 'finding out what people wanted and giving it to them.' It sounds like the sort of awful opportunism which might work dangerously in favour of the voters, something which would never do.

Meanwhile, although the camp of Roy Hattersley added its natural scorn for opportunism in the mangled plosives of the deputy leader, Hattersley himself was attracting the sort of attention which the stock market gives to the candidates for Lord Hanson's predatory attention. Cast as bidder — off the record at the start of the week, common knowledge by the end of it — was John Prescott. Now Labour needs an old fashioned deputy leadership contest the way it needs anthrax. But Prescott, having put in great quantities of constituency-stumping and having levered himself up to second place in the ballot, has notoriously felt excluded from inner circles.

A deft promotion in the last reshuffle would have made life vastly easier for Neil Kinnock. As it is Prescott went from Employment to Energy (after leaks about a return to Transport). That is, at best, a lateral move, arguably one which goes down diagonally, not the most politic act in the circumstances. For if Prescott *does* offer himself, Smith the Intellect and the Auckland Kid will both feel an irresistible urge to get into the ring. It is not that Roy Hattersley is so wonderful. I find that a little of his combined sanctimony, capriciousness and noble scorn goes a long way. But a four-way fight for the job of first mate on the life raft is ludicrous.

My instincts in this are primitive. Bribe Prescott with a job, point out to Gould that he is already Neil Kinnock's prime minister, and beg Smith, the best prosecuting Counsel in the House, to stand back from his deserts for the sake of the party. Robert Maclennan and David Steel are hearing their first good news for months on a topic — inner-party disputes — on which they have some combined expertise.

But to Labour one can only utter the words of neo-Militants opposing the collegiate reselection plan last Monday — 'Comrades, support the Status Quo!' □

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JOHN A. HALL

The radical right and the limits of individualism

WHAT IS the proper relationship between liberalism and the state? Distrust of the state has been endemic among liberals, especially those who believe that there is a relationship between economic growth and laissez faire: the hope of such thinkers seem to be that 'the state will wither away', to use the expression of Karl Marx, himself deeply influenced by this vision. But this is far too simple a position for liberalism to take, because there is a strong relationship between one type of state power and economic growth.

In order to appreciate this relationship, it is necessary to distinguish two separate dimensions of state power. The first dimension is despotism — its presence or absence. Liberals have tended to concentrate exclusively upon this facet of state power, as evidenced by the claim of laissez-faire philosophy that removal of despotism will 'unfetter' the economy. *But there is a second dimension of state power: infrastructural power, the extent to which the state can actually penetrate and tax society and hence organise it and provide it with services, from education to justice.*

A diminution of the state's role, however, may not correlate with economic advance; and it is vital to analyse this because the radical liberal right has recently made so much of the need to cut back the state's role in the economy.

The rise of the West involved the interaction of state and capital; if the former has grown in importance in modern times, so has the latter. *Competition within the world marketplace is now so intense that a state will only prosper if it can systematically enhance the social infrastructure so that it may survive in the world economy.*

AS THE Conservatives conclude their victory conference in Blackpool, we should ask these questions. Should we accept the claim of the radical right, so strongly made by the Thatcher government, that its policies are necessary if the goals of classical liberalism are to be achieved in modern circumstances? Will the policies of such governments, pursued to the fullest, result in the achievement of liberal ends?

It is useful to contrast two phases of the postwar situation of advanced capitalist societies. The first, lasting until the late 1960s, was a period of extraordinary economic growth. The productive energies of capitalism dramatically improved the standard of living; social citizenship rights (i.e., health and unemployment insurance) were extended to the working class, eliminating the worst rigours of capitalist society and increasing opportunities for the underprivileged. In turn, these mechanisms helped to maintain social peace. Critics have claimed that social cohesion was achieved because the working class was brainwashed through consumerism or through indoctrination by an education system; this is surely wrong. Most working people never fully endorsed the capitalist ethic, but they accepted it because the economy provided them with an ever-expanding array of benefits.

The second postwar phase began when the rate of economic growth slowed in the late 1960s. Intellectuals on both the left and the right argued that organised groups, most notably the working class, freed by their citizenship rights from earlier deferential behaviour, had become so aggressive that a state 'overloaded' by the demands faced a 'rationality crisis'; it seemed impossible to plan in the long-term interest of society, to 'steer the system'.

The concurrent political development may be described as a turning away from social Keynesianism and toward social Darwinism. A radical right, represented most conspicuously by Margaret Thatcher, tried to dismantle many citizenship rights and to restore social discipline, largely and perhaps intentionally through reintroducing the fear that accompanies large-scale unemployment. The radical right's programme was proclaimed to be 'liberal': first, because it was said to be necessary to make capitalism work; second, because certain radical 'liberal' ideologues attacked the notion of social entitlements on the grounds that individuals, rather than the state, are entitled to the profits of their labour.

> ***A workforce intimidated by unemployment provides the unskilled, obedient labour of the 19th C — not the force on which late industrialism depends***

Several factors undermine the claim of the radical right to be the true liberals of the contemporary world. Most obviously, their fear of ungovernability was exaggerated. Working-class behaviour, especially in Great Britain, has largely represented a reaction to economic failure (caused in good part by the decision of an autonomous political elite to maintain sterling as an international currency); it is highly doubtful that the activities of the working class actually *caused* economic decline.

The policies of the radical right do not encourage the development of a workforce suited to late industrialism. Most European countries gain the co-operation of labour through some form of corporatism — an arrangement that diminishes industrial conflict by integrating the working class and major capitalists in a national economic plan. Such corporatism can involve part of the workforce or all of it: the former policy, adopted by Japan and Germany, integrates workers in large firms but maintains a highly competitive labour market for smaller firms; the latter policy is fostered in Scandinavia. Unrestrained collective bargaining, in contrast, tends to encourage inflation when the economy declines, and to cause economic problems based on resentment when policies of the radical right are adopted.

A workforce intimidated by unemployment may provide the unskilled, obedient labour characteristic of the nineteenth century; however, such labour is surely not the force on which late industrialism depends. In both Scandinavian social corporatism and the microcorporatism of Germany and Japan, the state plays a cardinal role, providing a massive social infrastructure for the economy. This is evident in the exceptional importance accorded to educational services, and to a type of welfare designed to help economic dynamism. The success of these states highlights the absurdity of the individualistic tenets of the radical right: what sense is there to the view that the individual is entitled to what he creates, if the capacities of the individual result from benefits provided by a massive social infrastructure?

SUCCESSFUL STATES manage the market pragmatically. Contemporary European states are learning to avoid the planning of basic industries and to concentrate heavily on the provision of social infrastructures that allow a skilled workforce to respond speedily and flexibly to market opportunities. In Germany, the state provided seed money to encourage the development of several computer firms, subsequently allowing the market to decide which of them was the best — a striking contrast to Britain's misguided attempt to develop its computer industry by investing all state funds in a single company. The Japanese state helps its corporations by funding basic research and by helping to market manufactured products.

Contrary to the belief of the radical 'liberal' right, modern political economies cannot be 'left to the market'; the ability to participate in the market depends on the state's provision of a social infrastructure. The most successful states have found ways to curb laissez-faire practices internally in order to act effectively in the international market. In Austria, Japan, Switzerland, and Sweden, a high level of social skill has enabled these countries to adapt rapidly to changes in the world market. The future of leading states must lie in a high-wage, high-productivity economy — certainly not in the cutting of wages.

A country such as Britain, open to the world economy but disdainful of corporatism and welfare, cannot hope to compete. For the advanced economies to work, elites must act intelligently by recognising the need for a growing reservoir of skilled labour. In this perspective, radical liberal policies appear not only unpleasant but misconceived; they have created no new economic dynamism, despite specious and manipulated statistical claims to the contrary. □

John Hall is associate professor of sociology at Harvard University. This article was adapted from the summer issue of Daedalus, *the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, PO Box 515, Canton, Mass 02021, USA.*

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Rolling across the next four years

The Conservatives could now consolidate and mend — but they won't. **PETER CAPELLA, JOHN LLOYD** *and* **JOHN RENTOUL** *report*

IT WOULD not spoil her speech or the rapture of her reception: but it must have irritated, nonetheless: that the conference be preceded by a new trilogy — Biffen, Brittan and Heseltine — the Lords of the Whinge.

Biffen was interviewed at length by Monday's *Independent*, had as long in the same day's *Telegraph*, to give his view that 'you carry out . . . policies not in the spirit of determined evangelism, emphasising the radical and revolutionary nature of the change, but you emphasise the evolutionary character' (*Independent*) and 'Prime Ministers have always needed a sense of hubris to understand just how fickle is the political process. The more power seems assured, the more valuable is that quality of humility' (*Telegraph*).

Brittan, addressing a meeting in Bolton on Monday night, said that the government must broaden its approach so that 'the purpose is not only us getting richer . . . but also to help deal with the social problems which remain in this country'. And with a strong wind in his sails from the *Sunday Telegraph*, Michael Heseltine previewed his Macmillan lecture later in the week, a lecture which credited the post-war Tory governments (object of Thatcherite scorn) for laying the basis for present-day success. In an effort to bind the wounds in the Tory party before trying the easier tasks of healing those in the country, he told the *Telegraph* that 'I never believed in these [wet and dry] labels. I was in government, I know what happened and I know who was responsible for what . . . in industrial relations, the changes, based on the experience of the 1970s, were the work of Jim Prior, Norman Tebbit and Tom King . . . three very different kinds of Tories.'

The last two of the Lords of the Whinge were casualties of the Westland debacle: the first preoccupied by memories of it — 'a miserable affair'. They have substantial common ground, for all their differences (they have not formed into a group): all of them believe strongly in the rightness of what has been achieved so far, that it has created a new ground. Indeed, it is precisely *because* this new ground exists, they argue, that there now needs to be more care to make sure that hands are stretched in friendship across it, and that no large mistake be allowed to damage what has been put in place. And — *pace* Heseltine's blurring of the differences — none of them are card-carrying wets, while Brittan and more fundamentally Biffen are thought of as dries on most things. That makes their critique much more formidable than the 'morose and disgruntled' (in Biffen's words) sniping from such as Edward Heath.

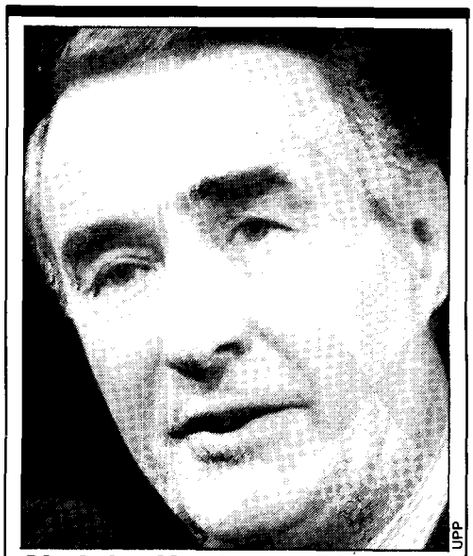
It is their opposition, and that of the followers on the back benches and in the country whom they may be able to attract, who will constitute the most serious opposition for a government which faces a ruminative, still-shocked Labour Party and the blasted heath that was the Alliance. They are the enemy within of the third term, their opposition made up in part of an anger with the Prime Minister: in part from a sense of rectitude; in part from a feeling that the government must be trammelled by *some* effective argument — and, in Michael Heseltine's case, a palpable and increasingly frankly confessed ambition — 'in a middle distance race you must always see a knot of people out towards the front and one man ahead. It's usually a safe bet that the man in front won't win. All I can say is that I have always been in the knot.'

The enemies in blue

They are all opposed, in varying degrees, to the poll tax. Heseltine devotes an extra chapter of his book, *Where There's a Will* — published this week — to argue that opposition to it could ditch any chance the government's plans for the inner cities have of acceptance; while Biffen, less categorically, talked of 'anxieties about the fairness of the tax, which it is feared will fall heavily on the poor' (the sentence has the ring of a charitable Victorian gentleman about it).

The poll tax, on present viewing, seems largely downside for the Tories. It will probably make more people worse off. It will be felt in Scotland in 1989 and in the rest of the country over the next 18 months — well within vengeance time for the next election. It has no relation to 'ability to pay' — though it is likely that the poorest will get a rebate. It will be very hard to collect, and may mean an evasion rate as high as 20 per cent. In last week's *Sunday Times*, Simon Jenkins estimated that an Inner London man with a non-working wife — say, with some expensive small children — could have to find between £1,500 and £2,000 in poll taxes. 'Try that on £8,000 a year,' said Jenkins.

On the worst case, the government could find itself forced by its own legislative momentum to bring in a tax which it would not drop because of loss of face but which alienates swathes of its own supporters and gives real flesh to charges of its beng a government for the rich: a poll on Tuesday showed more than 70 per cent of respondents think that charge had some weight already. Nicholas Ridley, the environment secretary, is publicly abrasive and impatient — though his minister, Michael Howard, is a smoother man altogether. It will need much smoothing to get the measure rounded enough to slide down Tory throats — let alone the country's. ▷



UPP

Sir John Hoskyns, Director General, Institute of Directors

'A struggle between radicals and consolidators is going on behind the scenes at all times. I tend to think that, since the election, the radicals will probably prevail.

'I don't think trade union law is as salient as it once was. Other things are happening to trade unions in the real world. Of course there should be freedom of association: but what we cannot do is to fix the price of labour any more on a collective basis. That's an abdication of management responsibility. It's so much easier to buy people in a package — but all modern management thinking points to treating people as individuals, not treating them as mere factors of production. This means the union role has to change.

'The problem for Labour is to look sufficiently different from the competition. The way they do that now is to feed back into their policy thinking a lot of the old stuff which is pretty discredited. But I think they are in the process of a reappraisal which could lead to an acceptance of the market, and the party system will emerge along the lines of the Democrats and the Republicans in the US.

'I think the government does need a bargaining partner now. A grand industrial strategy doesn't cut much ice, but government purchases between 25 and 30 per cent of the GDP, and it's utterly engaged in defence. Plus, other countries are interventionist: and so until these other countries do as our government wishes to do, we're in a bit of a prisoner's dilemma.' ●

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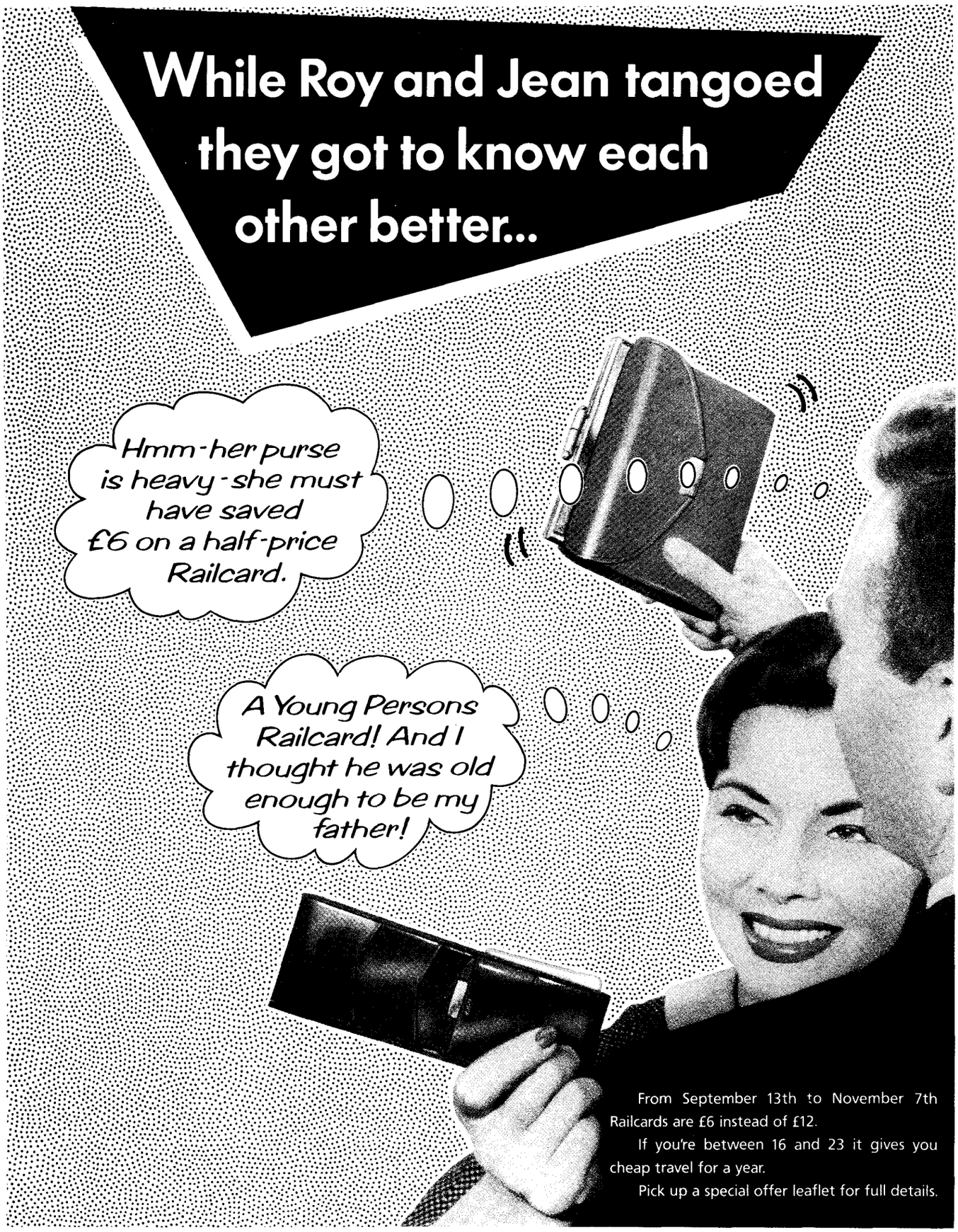
While Roy and Jean tangoed they got to know each other better...


Hmm - her purse is heavy - she must have saved £6 on a half-price Railcard.
A Young Persons Railcard! And I thought he was old enough to be my father!

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In education, in local government, and in housing reform, the pitfalls are less obviously apparent, yet possibly larger if discovered. In all three areas Labour authorities have been more or less on the defensive: the government has been able to pose as the necessary new broom, and may still. In all of these, though, the government is seeking to diminish the powers of local authorities by taking power into the hands of the state. Much more evident in this third term will be the already evident mixture of policies designed to devolve power to the 'lowest' possible level — the individual — while taking other powers centrally. It worries many Tories, especially, of course, councillors.

Carry on union bashing

One of less contentious measures probably of the new Parliament will be the trade union bill: less contentious, because the source of protest, the trade union movement, is at least as prostrate presently as Labour and in little mood to do more than repeat its already-lodged formal protests. But even if that proves to be the case, it may be seen as endangering the new ground for a more subtle reason than causing obvious and loud disaffection.

There are still many enthusiasts for trade union reform. Professor Patrick Minford of Liverpool University called for all union immunities to be repealed as far back as 1983: at a select seminar held by the still-fertile Institute of Economic Affairs last week, Dr Charles Hanson of Newcastle University repeated the call, saying it would be the 'clearest possible earnest of the government's intention to ignore the special pleading of producer lobbies and to give producers that priority which is their due'. The authoritarian idea of banning strikes in so-called essential services, mooted then squashed in the second Thatcher government, may be looked at again.

In the shorter run, the next trade union bill, to be based on the green paper 'Trade Unions and their Members', will introduce wider balloting before strikes; a new figure called a trade union commissioner to oversee union affairs and act as a referee of first resort for complainant members; dismissal to be considered unfair automatically when done for refusing to join a union; and the curbing of a union's right to discipline its members who have refused to strike, even after a ballot had approved the action. This is thought too strong meat by several employers' bodies, who make the case that unions are now in danger of being the *only* voluntary bodies which *cannot* impose sanctions on their members for breaking the rules.

The fact that the measure will pass into law without national or even local protest is beside the point. Of much greater importance is that the trade union movement is now in a mood and in a state to deal with the government, to recognise the terrain which government has helped to create as, presently, the only realistic one on which to stand; and that, if there were some will to deal on government side, some new alliances might be struck which might be to the nation's benefit.

Though change has occurred everywhere in industry, services and in the public sector, there is much more to come if the British workforce and British capital is to produce at the quantity and quality of its competitors. Unit costs are still ahead; productivity still behind; new technologies still relatively lacking; skills and education relatively lower, sometimes (as against the West Germans) much lower. Many employers get change through negotiations and persuasion: they grumble that they do not find these arts much encouraged, or practised, by government. They fear that a new round of legislation will make matters worse.

Norman Tebbit, also doing the round of the studios as conference began, argued as he has done for years that these maulings were the same noises heard before every legislative change to employment law in the past eight years — before the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts, and the 1984 Trade Union Act. All went through, with success.

But all went through when the unions were either unprepared to accept that they would stay — when they were still acting, as the then TUC general secretary Len Murray told the 1983 Congress in the bleakest of speeches, four years before its time — like a 'government in exile, a brother Bonnie Prince Charlie'; and in 1984, the miners' strike distracted all attention. Now there are bargains to be struck; bargains that *should* be struck, with unions which gather together more than nine million people.

What is true of the unions holds good for other

Anna McCurley, former Conservative MP, Renfrew West and Inverclyde

'The shock of having a proactive government is beginning to die down a bit. It's becoming the norm, and isn't being ooh'd and aah'd at any longer.

'The opposition never thought things through for the last ten years. Only Owen had the right idea for opposition. I think that "Thatcherism" is only a gloss put on something that would have happened anyway. There's so many movements in the national economy, in the world economy, which could not have been resisted by any government. Thatcherism was the best at coping with them.

'I often think that there's too much whingeing in Scotland about London being too far away, and Scotland being ignored. For all that, in a small society like Scotland, some measure of consensus is a necessity.

'One of the reasons I'm a Tory is that I'm anti-establishment, and Labour is the establishment where I come from. Thatcherism is bound to percolate through to Scotland some day: in fact, it already has in some ways.

'I spent a lot of time as an MP touring the country, seeing what was happening, how the anatomy of Britain was changing. In some parts of the country there are great things happening. But in some parts it is a disaster. I remember being quite shocked at Sheffield, with its heart and guts torn out. I do remember those parts that look simply worn out now.'●

UPP

Mary Whitehouse, President, National Listeners' and Viewers' Association

'I don't question that the government is going to bring broadcasting under the Obscene Publications Act. But what's wrong with the present Act is that you have to prove a "tendency to deprave and corrupt". Well, you can never prove a tendency. We don't want a great repressive Act, we feel, particularly in relation to broadcasting, this is necessary as a long stop. And only for, for instance, some of the things Channel Four did on its red triangle.

'On the one hand there's a free market . . . but you don't equate freedom with licence. I'm very clear in my mind that licence can in many ways be the denigration of freedom. I'm for freedom under the law, and I mean under the moral law as well as the law of the land; because no man — or woman — has a right to so much so-called freedom that they put other people in peril. That is the difference between freedom and licence. Everybody is free to the extent that they don't put other people at risk.

'You probably saw in the *Guardian* on Saturday about the man who killed a seven-year-old girl after watching strangulation scenes on the video. This is what it's all about. These people who get on their tub-thumping things to say we must have freedom — what about the child's right to life? It makes me angry.

'You will *never prove* that this man *did what he did because he saw what he saw*, unless you can get in that man's mind and know precisely how it functions, which is impossible to do, you can't prove . . . you've got to get *away* from this silly business of having to prove things. We've got to start using our common sense and human experience then we might get somewhere.

'I'm sure that as far as violence is concerned, one does become desensitised; I *know* that is so. I had to ask the Lord today that, if he he was going to get me going on this work, he's got to look after my mind, and if I *do* have to see anything I just say to Him, you look after it all, and I find that that's been a great protection.' ●

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centres of power. The Labour authorities which the Tories love to hate — such as Brent and Lambeth in London — are all passing balanced budgets: in Brent, that process seemed to have claimed the political life of Merle Amory, as she resigned earlier this week; while in Lambeth, Linda Bellos, masking her legitimacy in a crazy speech about Mrs Thatcher creating gas chambers, found herself outflanked to the left for the first time in her municipal life when *she* struggled towards legality. The Association of London Authorities, now soft-left led and chaired by Margaret Hodge, the born-again pragmatist from Islington, is now looking for ways to stress service and moderation in all things.

Labour smiles better

Elsewhere, Labour-led councils have never been other than that. In Glasgow, a solid Labour council has stolen Tory clothes to enter into alliances with private capital which has put some meaning behind the slogan that 'Glasgow Smiles Better'; while in Labour heartlands from South Wales to the North East, Labour councillors struggle to serve their often devastated patches within both budgets and the law. These are the councils who should enter into partnership with a government which claims to be anxious to do something about these inner cities the Prime Minister had in her mind on the morning of 12 June; yet these are the ones who will be further disoriented and destabilised by the measures which will limit their power and scope.

There was little hope, from the conference rhetoric this week, that the spirit of partnership would be summoned up early in this third term. Unsurprisingly, the dominant mood was that Thatcherism continues to produce the goods: the most aggressive band of Scots Tories came to conference from Alan Stewart's constituency of Eastwood, the only Tory seat in Strathclyde, to argue that Scots Tories should be 'apostles not apologists' for the leader, and that Thatcherism *could* bed down in the heather.

And in Lambeth again, the Tory councillors — 21-strong — split earlier in the week over a strategy of opposition to the warring Labour group. The leader, her deputy and the chief whip and his deputy had all resigned two weeks before: a younger faction, led by Tebbit's protegé John Bercow, a Former Federation of Conservative Students' chair, pushed to the point of a split their determination to adopt a more raucous, gloves-off style, designed to appeal to working-class South Londoners fed up with Bellos.

> ***Conference season ends with a landscape dominated by the Tory juggernaut: its direction will determine what happens to our society into the 1990s***

Confrontation, the natural mode of many in the Tory leadership, seems likely to give the new consensualists' propositions a drubbing for some time yet. The motions at Blackpool stressed punishment to fit the crimes, hanging (again), an edge of racism, a more confident rejection of liberal social and sexual values, the welcoming of a new enemy — TV violence — into the midst of debate. The sentiments which Mary Whitehouse (see box) regards as common sense are finding more, not less, fertile ground: the rolling back of the 1960s still has a long way to go, and many Tories want it to roll back very far over the next four years.

Thus the conference season ends with a landscape utterly dominated by the Conservative juggernaut: its movements, its direction, will determine what is to happen to our society, our economy and our democracy into the 1990s. The message from Blackpool was that those who would seek to put a brake on it will be dragged along by it, with the rest of us, for a while yet. □

Sunday Telegraph

Bruce Anderson, Assistant Editor, *Sunday Telegraph*

'There's a lot of confidence in the Tory Party now: a battle-hardened feeling. Parts of the last parliament were pretty bad; people are saying: this one can't be worse.

'There is a feeling that Bryan Gould might be able to come up with something for the Labour Party which will enable it to leap over Thatcherism, but also that it has a lot of baggage to get rid of.

'The opposition from within is quite muted. If the polls start turning against the government in a year or two then that might change.

'Poll tax is a big problem: it is unpopular for now. And the education proposals might run into trouble if Kenneth Baker raises expectations he can't fulfill.

'Mrs Thatcher looks fit to go on right through. If Denis's health gives way she might go to look after him. But he seems well on a diet of gin and cigarettes.' ●

John Jenner, chairman of Policy Committee, Weymouth and Portland Borough Council, until April this year

'There's no credible alternative [to the Tory party], but that doesn't preclude one from criticising one's own party. I know Maggie doesn't like it but I shall remain the same.

'I've never heard of anything so stupid [as the poll tax] in all my life. I can see the day rapidly approaching when the main responsibilities of the borough engineer will be to wind the village clock. That's not my idea of democracy. The more you centralise local affairs, the further you get away from the root of democracy. At the moment 95 per cent of the community have no concept at all what the community charge is going to do. As soon as they realise, all hell will break loose.

'I prefer the existing system. History shows that a property tax works. It's easy to operate and it's relatively fair. There are other ways of dealing with the poor old widow living next door to somebody with ten people in the family earning wages.

'And many of us [Conservatives in Dorset] believe as I do that it is the end of democracy as we know it in our lifetime. We have held meetings with eight members of parliament for Dorset and we've lambasted them, we've given them a rough passage and they've gone away saying well, you've given us a lot of food for thought. Then they go off and look forward to getting their next £5,000 on January the 1st, you know, I'm all right Jack, so sod you.

'If you look at Wandsworth, in my opinion that's an absolute disaster. I would sooner team up with people like Livingstone than with people like them. They are a disgrace. They certainly aren't liked by the rest of local authorities in this country. They did rather well in the elections last year. That's true. You can fool some of the public. It depends how you present it. But because they are so far right-wing doesn't mean that all of us are tarred with that brush.' ●

Old friends

As the *New Statesman* approaches its 75th birthday (13 April 1988), we are looking to contact as many of our longest-serving readers and subscribers as possible. If you've been reading the *NS* since the 1940s we would like to hear from you with reminiscences or anecdotes. Please write to **Joanne Hurst, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ.**

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SOVIET UNION

Glasnost on the game

UNTIL LAST autumn prostitution did not officially exist in the Soviet Union. But on 22 July the Supreme Soviet made prostitution an administrative offence punishable by fines of up to 200 roubles (about £200).

Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, or openness, was applied at first in a limited fashion to this sensitive issue: the Soviet press reported that prostitutes exist only in major cities and congregate in hard currency hotels catering to foreigners. Recent articles indicate, however, that prostitution is far more widespread.

Soviet authorities chose to allow a more open discussion about prostitution because it was becoming increasingly difficult to deny. They had long recognised the connection between prostitution and pornography, venereal disease, drug addiction, black marketeering, currency speculation and theft. Now Aids is a new hazard to face. The most promising way of attacking prostitution, the authorities concluded, was to publicise its hazards and encourage public condemnation of those engaged in it. 'Only once society becomes completely intolerant toward prostitution,' an article in *Izvestia* declared recently, 'will the measures adopted by law enforcement agencies truly work.'

Prostitutes who frequent the hard currency bars, restaurants and hotels are the élite of their profession. There are considerable overheads for them: payments to doormen who let them enter hotels, waiters who reserve tables, taxi drivers who work as chauffeurs and find clients and doctors who falsify health certificates. But the financial rewards can be enormous: the Soviet press has cited instances of prostitutes earning the hard currency equivalent of 40,000 roubles ($60,000) a year and pimps up to 500 roubles ($750) a night.

Prostitutes who target foreign students and sailors do not have as glamorous a life. According to press reports, those who frequent student dormitories spend weeks wandering from one room to the next without setting foot outside and earning very little. At the bottom of the profession are those prostitutes who frequent the train stations of major cities and sell themselves for as little as a bottle of cheap wine.

The press also blames the lack of courses on sex and ethics in Soviet schools. Since prostitution did not officially exist before last autumn, there could be no law regulating it. The Soviet militia could only arrest a prostitute on charges of not holding a state job, engaging in black market activities and currency speculation, spreading venereal disease, or causing public disturbance. Prostitutes were obliged to bribe officials to list them as a student or worker in a state enterprise. If this failed, a prostitute resorted to motherhood; she would either give birth herself or pay someone to have a baby which hospital officials would register incorrectly on the birth certificate for a fee.

One prostitute recently wrote to *Literaturnaya Gazeta* suggesting that the state legalise prostitution and tax it up to 40 per cent. For many prostitutes that would mean surrendering over 10,000 roubles. It's a safe bet that in the Soviet Union the world's oldest profession will continue to reap very unsocialist profits.

Anthony Gardner

PERMANENT GOVERNMENT

Turf fighting in Whitehall

Peter Hennessy

ONCE A BOUNDARY between one piece of territory and another becomes controversial, it tends to stay that way for generations. Whitehall has its equivalent of the old Curzon Line in the precise frontier that should be drawn between its so-called central departments. There used to be three of these until Mrs Thatcher disbanded the Civil Service Department in 1981 distributing its displaced persons between the Cabinet Office (which took in its management and personnel people) and the Treasury (who offered sanctuary to its pay and manpower divisions).

'Bureaucratic terse fights waste Whitehall energy. The latest redrawing of the boundary between the Cabinet Office and the Treasury solves nothing . . .'

The latest refugee convoy, some 70 strong, moved the few yards from the Cabinet Office to the Treasury last week taking with them their duties on such excitables as flexible working patterns and the use of consultants. It's as arcane as the nineteenth century Schleswig-Holstein Question which, if I remember correctly, was understood by three people one of whom had died, one had gone mad and the third had forgotten.

Of rather greater importance to the central management of the Civil Service, its 600,000 staff and £13 billion running costs are two pieces of paper which circulated slowly through the system this summer disguised, as is the Whitehall habit, behind innocuous sounding titles such as *The Next Steps* and *The Better Management of Government*. The first was drafted by Sir Robin Ibbs of ICI, the Prime Minister's Efficiency Adviser; the second by Sir Kenneth Stowe who retired as Permanent Secretary to the Department of Health and Social Security in February and spent three months in the Cabinet Office pondering the future of the profession he was about to leave.

The two studies are closely related. *The Next Steps* canvasses the view long held by Mr Michael Heseltine among others that the big executive functions of Whitehall — the tax-gathering, the benefit-paying and the vehicle-licensing — should be separated from the job of advising ministers on policy and run as what they are, big businesses with accountable managements pursuing specific tasks in relation to performance indicators that can be measured. *The Better Management of Government* is about what kind of supervisory board there should be at the centre to fix strategy and to progress chase while refraining from the kind of nannying of the spending and managing departments traditionally associated with Treasury controls and initiatives from the Cabinet Office.

THE IDEA OF a supervisory board for the Civil Service as a whole seems particularly promising. Based on the Department of Health and Social Security's Management Board for the National Health Service (which oversees the third largest enterprise in the world after the Red Army and Indian State Railways), it would, among other virtues, have brought in businessmen familiar with running vast private businesses and meeting, in part at least, the call for new blood in Whitehall made by Sir John Hoskyns and his Reskilling Government Group. As an additional bonus, it might have effectively resolved that ancient frontier problem between the central departments.

Sadly, the latest Whitehall intelligence suggests it's not a runner — that it has lost out to the Prime Minister's preference where possible for informal arrangements rather than permanent structures. The Treasury and the Cabinet Office will continue to get by with their joint management board and *ad hoc* consultations between Sir Peter Middleton at the Treasury, Sir Robert Armstrong in the Cabinet Office and Sir Robin Ibbs.

The thinking behind *The Next Steps*, however, has not yet run its course. Ministers will return to it when normal business is resumed after the party conference season. The outlook for it is less than promising. The Treasury has an acute sense of its power and the threats to it. Every night, as one experienced figure put it to me, they peer out over their battlements and see the fires of their numerous departmental enemies as they wait for the dawn to attack. Devolving substantial pieces of power, in the shape of manpower and money controls, of those lifelong foes will cut against the grain of a thousand-year tradition.

For a rational, reform-minded figure like John Ward, General Secretary of the top officials' union, the First Division Association, the fate of *The Next Steps* and *The Better Management of Government* is a golden opportunity squandered, particularly as the departure of Sir Robert Armstrong at the end of December would have been a natural point at which to make changes. Last week Mr Ward said that the chance of a necessary public debate on such matters had gone by default. He greatly regretted it. He's not the only one.

Bureaucratic terse fights waste Whitehall energy. The latest redrawing of the boundary between the Cabinet Office and the Treasury solves nothing, leaving as it does a rather pathetic little band in the Cabinet Office. More important, the pigeon-holing of *The Better Management of Government* suggests that fundamental heavy-duty questions about the purpose and practice of the central direction of the Civil Service remain to be addressed. □

Peter Hennessy is a Visiting Fellow at the Policy Studies Institute.

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ECONOMICS

Mr Moore's welfare stakes

Malcolm Wicks

THE ROLE of the state in welfare is becoming one of the most critical questions in British politics. John Moore is partly responsible, but only partly. The new Social Services Secretary — and much-hyped heir apparent to Mrs Thatcher — upped the stakes with his well-signalled speech to a Conservative Political Centre conference.

But it is also a question at the heart of Labour's policy rethink. A return to the pre-1979 position is out of the question: Neil Kinnock has spoken of the need for 'a state that should be under our feet and not over our heads'. Labour's rethink occurs when the Conservatives might again be about to shift the goal posts. 'For more than a quarter century after the last war,' argued John Moore, 'public opinion in Britain, encouraged by politicians, travelled down the aberrant path towards ever more dependence on an ever more powerful state.' He decried 'the sullen apathy of dependence', contrasting it with 'the sheer delight of personal achievement'. And in this he reiterates the thinking of the Prime Minister who, just a few weeks ago, in her interview with the *Independent*, attacked 'the socialist queue approach'.

The policy targets are clear. Already in place, the Social Security Act with its controversial Social Fund aims to rein back payments (for such essential items as clothing and bedding) to the poorest on Supplementary Benefit through loans. Even more serious is the aggressive sniping at child benefit which opened the new political season. Much is possible, given that the social security budget at £46 billion is the biggest (a massive one-third of all public spending), and now under the control of an ex-Treasury minister and declared Thatcher supporter.

What about the charge that the welfare state creates dependency? It depends on what kinds of state welfare. There is all the difference in the world between saying 'Here is a benefit which is an entitlement of citizenship, which you share with all other citizens, rich and poor' and saying 'If you really are poor, apply for this benefit, but we will have to vet you carefully, assess all your income and review your living arrangements before deciding on your eligibility'.

There is a big difference between universal and means-tested benefits. Universal provision, as a right of citizenship, was the outstanding achievement of the British welfare state. The NHS, pensions, child benefit and the like have promoted welfare, on the basis of well understood rights, and have been a force for social justice — and *independence*. They contrast with those benefits that apply only to the poorest, which are means-tested, carefully policed and inevitably create feelings of inferiority, second-class citizenship and often, dependency.

Public assistance schemes throughout our history — whether poor laws, National Assistance, Supplementary Benefit, or Income Support (as it will be termed from April) — inevitably foster dependence, particularly among claimants of working age.

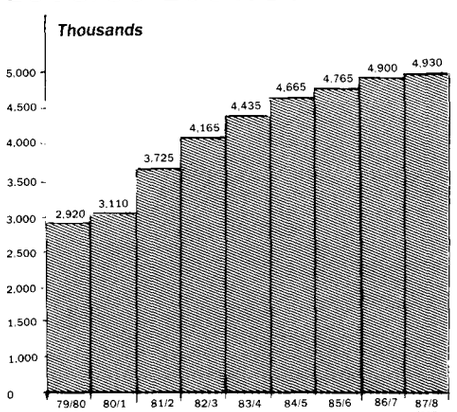
What are John Moore's alternatives? Will the Social Fund, with the granting of loans (to be repaid from low weekly benefits) and advice from bureaucrats about budgeting create more or less dependence? Would more reliance on charities, which he applauds, make for independence — or merely, unreliable private dependence?

Just after the Labour Party's debate on social security last week, I was stopped by a man as I passed Brighton Pier: 'Could you spare anything for a cup of tea?' Did he feel independent as I handed him a coin? Poverty breeds dependence, whether on the state, private charity or begging. The answer is to attack poverty, not its victims.

It is also significant that John Moore's target for his moral lecture was state benefits, while leaving out of his analysis the whole range of tax reliefs and allowances that represent the alternative welfare state. All this 'fiscal welfare',as Richard Titmuss called it, represents a multi-billion pound budget, with mortgage tax relief alone costing £4.5 billion in 1986/87.

Whereas one welfare state helps the poorest most, the other helps the richest — yet the latter is spared Moore's attack on 'the indiscriminate handing out of benefits'. Do the rich feel dependent? Or do they have big grins on their faces indicating the 'sheer delight' of so much state cash?

Average numbers receiving supplementary benefit 1978/80-1987/88



Source: The Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88 *Cmnd 9428-II Table 3.12.4 and* The Government's Expenditure Plans 1987-88 to 1989-90 *Cmnd 56-II Table 3.15.5*

Let us also note one supreme irony about John Moore's focus on dependency. It is a curious emphasis from a minister whose government has presided over such a massive increase in the number of people dependent on Supplementary Benefits. Fuelled by unemployment, the number of Supplementary Benefit claimants below pensionable age increased from 1.2 million in 1979/80 to over 3 million in 1987/88. Including pensioners, the number of Supplementary Benefit claimants is now around 5 million (see chart). Including spouses and children, the total number of people dependent on Supplementary Benefit is now around 9 million.

The ideological battle over welfare could become the most vital of Mrs Thatcher's third term. The move away from state support is not solely to be seen within social security. A more general pattern emerges: policies for elderly people emphasise community care, while Kenneth Baker's plans for our schools and the new housing White Paper all, in different ways, show the way ideas are moving.

What kind of 'welfare state' is required by an increasingly affluent society? If the average man now owns seven pairs of trousers, as John Moore — rather curiously — told us, what are the implications? A challenge for a party still moved by the philosophy of the ragged trousered philanthropist.

The Labour Party came into being with a profound belief in the power of central government, local authorities and other public bodies to do good, to promote human welfare and to reduce inequalities. This was the socialism of Sidney and Beatrice Webb and Herbert Morrison that spawned a hundred Fabian tracts and gave impetus to the London County Council and many other municipalities. It was the socialism that was responsible for concrete achievements: declining rates of infant mortality, housing with inside lavatories and hot and cold running water and rising education standards are some of the results we now take for granted. But it *was* often paternalistic; perfectly expressed by Douglas Jay in *The Socialist Case*, published in 1947: 'For in the case of nutrition and health, just as in the case of education, the gentleman in Whitehall really does know better what is good for people than the people know themselves.' The electors of 1945, implicitly at least, believed in this and voted for a programme which was to involve massive state intervention in many areas of their families' lives.

Faith in this approach faltered in the 1960s, since when uncertainty and anxiety about the relationship between the citizen and the state have been growing. Certainly many council tenants, health consumers and social security recipients do not regard their relations with the state as wholly positive (to put it mildly).

In some respects, the Labour Party is not easily placed to understand some of these anxieties because, being the party of *labour*, it is better at hearing the wishes of the staff of welfare bureaucracies than it is at recognising the worries of consumers, who are, in any case, largely unorganised. (Indeed, in at least some constituency Labour parties, welfare state professionals are probably better represented than those whom they 'serve'.)

There is no place, however, for a facile anti-statism. Much social progress has come from state action and any drive towards equality, particularly in an era of the mutinational corporation, will often require stronger, not weaker, government action. As Tawney observed:

> It is still constantly assumed by privileged classes that, when the state holds its hand, what remains, as a result of its inaction, is liberty. In reality, as far as the mass of mankind is concerned, what commonly remains is, not liberty, but tyranny.

The stakes are certainly high: if the New Right is allowed to hijack 'choice', 'freedom' and 'independence' as part of the vocabulary of dismantling the welfare state they will be powerful weapons in its campaign for inequality. If, however, they become key concepts in the development of a modern social policy they will be revitalising ingredients in the renewed search for social justice. □

Malcolm Wicks is the author of A Future for All: Do we need a welfare state? *published by Penguin.*

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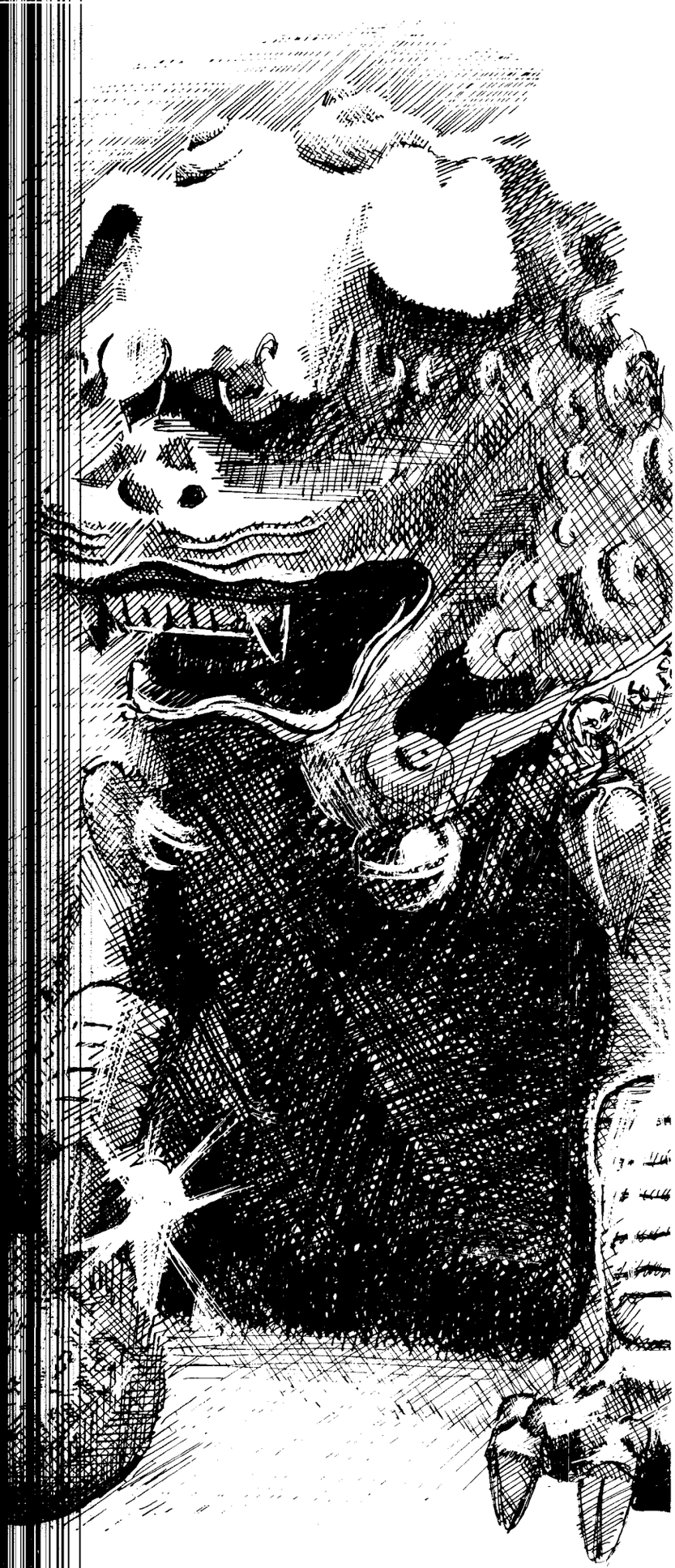

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METAMORPHOSIS

A working-class boy moves to the right

ANTHONY CURWEN *tells a tale of our times*

I GREW UP in the late '20s and early '30s in a small railway town in North Lancashire. Cecil Parkinson grew up in the same town, though he was some eight or nine years younger than myself. I recall him as a rather pale, quiet child, but I remember his father much more clearly. Sidney was a platelayer on the railway, a man of florid good looks and uncertain temper. Today Cecil bears an astonishing physical likeness to his father, even though he seems more restrained in public. I do not share Cecil's political beliefs but I take vicarious pleasure in his success, whatever Lt. Col. Keays may say.

My father also worked on the railway, as a carriage and wagon examiner – a wheeltapper to music hall comedians. He was a lovely, modest man who sang in the church choir, bought his own house, and gave his employers more loyalty than they deserved. He was the archetypal thrifty, respectable working man, for whom I can see no counterpart in modern Britain. Whereas then we had the working, middle and upper classes we now have the unemployed, the bourgoisie and the fat cats.

As a small child I would accompany my parents, who were Liberals, to political meetings which were always lively and often rowdy affairs. I doubt if my father would have had much in common with David Steel, or Paddy Ashdown, or Simon Hughes, and that would have been their loss. It is not sufficiently understood that in pre-war Britain the bulk of working-class people were not Labour Party supporters. They were Liberals like my father or Tories like Cecil's father. Labour Party activists in those days came from the ranks of upper-class Fabians, the more intelligent shopkeepers, and schoolteachers who had flirted with the ILP.

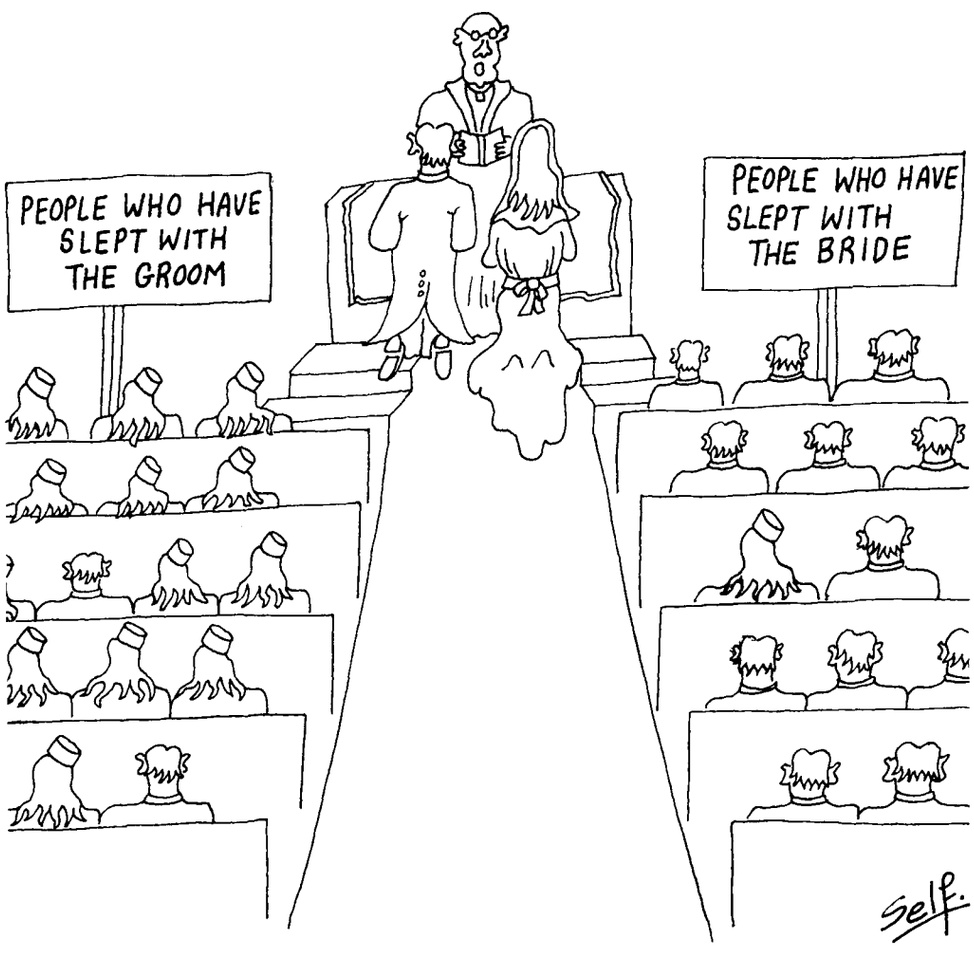
In 1932 my father was killed at work, and the railway company sent my mother a letter of condolence and a cheque for £300, with which she paid off the mortgage. Overnight we had become extremely poor, for this was long before Social Security. My mother went to work in the local mill for the next 20 years, and I wore cast-off clothes for the rest of my childhood. My father had been a member of the National Union of Railwaymen, and NUR Widows and Orphans Fund was a good friend to us for the next few years. It made sure that we had a decent holiday and a happy Christmas, and that we never went without essential items. In 1936 I needed an operation, and since there was no National Health Service the NUR paid for my stay in hospital and the surgeon's fee. All this has left me with a lasting sense of gratitude and loyalty to the trade union movement, whatever its latter day excesses.

Here comes socialism

In the 1945 general election I voted Labour, in common with millions of my fellow servicemen. I doubt that we did so through any passionate commitment to Labour Party policy. Rather it was, I think, that we were all fed up with authority, and had a feeling that the war had been won in spite of, rather than because of, Winston Churchill. The next six years were to see the death knell of all our hopes of a brave new Britain. The Attlee cabinet contained, among others, Herbert Morrison, London's answer to Mayor Daley, the thuggish Ernest Bevin, the unspeakable Hugh Dalton, the eccentric Stafford Cripps and the statutory collection of Welsh windbags.

This motley crew was presided over by the disastrous Clement Attlee. Cecil King once said of Attlee: 'He is a man I should say of limited intelligence and no personality. If one heard he was getting £6 a week in the service of East Ham Corporation one would be surprised he was earning so much.' Whatever unctuous historians may say to the contrary, I take this to be a fair assessment of the man. Like Harold Wilson and Margaret Thatcher he had more than his share of good luck, and he exploited it ruthlessly to his private advantage. The major problem with the Attlee cabinet was that it was ideological rather than pragmatic — the opposite of the Wilson cabinets. With its fear of syndicalism it created monolithic state industries and appointed retired generals to run them. It appeared incapable of dealing with crises, of which there were many and seemed not to have heard of the art of communication. At the general election of 1951 it reaped its reward.

During the 1950s I was extremely active in Labour Party politics as borough party secretary and then constituency party secretary. Most of us were ardent Bevanites and had little more time for Gaitskell than we had for Attlee. I remember taking a party resolution to the House of Commons and meeting a youthful Wedgwood Benn. This was an exhilarating experience and I find it sad that in recent years he has gone off the boil. Rumour had it that he was nobbled by the CIA putting something in his tea, but I can find no mention of this in *Spycatcher*. I also met Herbert Morrison in the mid-'50s and by that time he had



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certainly gone off the boil. I remember wondering what on earth Ellen Wilkinson had seen in him.

A reward for party activists was that you had occasional weekends at Beatrice Webb House near Dorking. My main memories are of much wine being drunk, much hot air, and, for the more resourceful, a certain amount of fornication. Rather like an Open University summer school. At one such weekend I met a short, fat Welshman called Clive Jenkins, who told me that if I wanted to get on in life I should engage in trade union affairs.

At that time I *was* becoming concerned with getting on, for I was in my mid-30s and had spent the years since the war in jobs such as mortuary attendant, milk roundsman, male nurse and plumber's mate. I had heard that the TUC offered one year full-time scholarships to trade union members, tenable at LSE or Ruskin. To qualify, one had to write an essay and then, if thought suitable, go to London for interview. The essay topic that year was 'How far has socialism changed since the days of Robert Owen?' I sat down to write a blistering, not say libellous, attack on the Labour and trade union hierarchy, and was amazed to be summoned to Transport House for interview. Facing me across the table was an assortment of grandees. Billy Hughes from Ruskin was flanked by Morgan Phillips, general secretary of the Labour Party and Ben Roberts from LSE. It was the day after George Brown had insulted Bulganin and Krushchev at the House of Commons, and Morgan Phillips seemed to be feeling some after-affects. He was red of face and had some difficulty with his consonants. It soon became apparent that I was not there to be offered a scholarship and things became very heated, for in those days I was even more choleric than Morgan Phillips. Two days later I received a letter from the trustees of the TUC Educational Trust, regretting that they were unable to offer me a scholarship.

During the winter months a friend lent me a copy of something akin to 'How to win friends and influence people' and in the spring I applied once more for a TUC scholarship. This time I wrote a nauseatingly sycophantic tribute to trade union leaders and I was summoned to the new TUC headquarters, complete with its Epstein statue. My interview was extremely perfunctory and I got my scholarship to LSE. The London School of Economics in the late '50s had some outstanding staff, with men such as Otto Kahn Freund, Henry Phelps Brown, Arthur John and Jack Wiseman. The Students Union was not short of visiting speakers, and a popular double act was Michael Foot and Barbara Castle, though I preferred Manny Shinwell. For me the giant in the post-war trade union movement was George Woodcock, whose dark brooding genius has been a hard act to follow. All we are left with now is Norman Willis and Ron Todd.

Madeira and class treachery

After LSE I went to Worcester College, Oxford, and my time there more than made up for all the hard years that had gone before. I did little work, but I enjoyed myself enormously, going out to wild parties at Magdalen and playing cricket for the college third eleven. I did not get a very good degree — a modest third — but then Frank Bough got a fourth, and look where he is now. The Provost of Worcester was J. C. Masterman, probably the most gifted and likeable man I have ever met. He was very kind to me and we kept in touch almost until his death. I treasure his memory. Another Oxford giant was A. J. P. Taylor to whom I would go for tutorials. In his room at Magdalen, with its original Lowry over the fireplace, we would have some heated arguments, for he was a fan of Clem Attlee.

Many people would say that by going to Oxford I was myself successfully embourgeoised. It is true that I acquired a taste for madeira and that we quickly left our council house for a semi-detached. I became a teacher in further education and 'got on', eventually becoming a principal, or gaffer as my father would have said. It was a way of life I rather enjoyed, and the inevitable happened — I joined the Liberal Party. I stood for the council two or three times and was on the panel of parliamentary candidates. I was even shortlisted for the memorable Sutton by-election. Had I been chosen I would at least have made it to 'Who's Who'. Those were heady days. The Liberal Party had just as much hot air and fornication as the Labour Party, but there was much more frivolity. Jo Grimond would glide up to our meetings in his silver Bentley, and very few Liberal councillors wore beards or sandals.

The Wilson governments in the '60s and '70s contained some very able men, but they had more than their fair share of human frailty, if we are to believe the Crossman diaries. The stumbling block for me was Harold Wilson himself. His chief defect has always been that he is a Yorkshireman. The women of Yorkshire are a cheerful hardy lot, but their menfolk are quite another matter. You have to live and work in Yorkshire, as I did, to realise just how unwholesome is your average Yorkshireman. Totally lacking a sense of humour, egocentric to an alarming degree, crudely insular, unwilling to admit mistakes and boringly anecdotal. Consider the following roll call: Harold Wilson, Michael Parkinson, Geoffrey Boycott, Arthur Scargill, Freddie Trueman and Harvey Smith.

I continued my flirtation with the political centre when I joined the SDP in its very early days. I always thought that the SDP's biggest mistake was its daft entanglement with the Liberals. The Liberal Party of the '80s contains more players than gentlemen and some of them are very nasty indeed. I hope that a separate SDP survives the combined onslaughts of David Steel and the erstwhile Cheyne Walk socialists, although it is not, at present, for me. In June of this year I had become so disaffected with politics that I did not bother to vote. My childhood and the war years have made it impossible for me ever to vote Tory, but what are the alternatives? As a child I attended a nonconformist church whose minister was Welsh. Full of rhetoric he would deliver 40-minute sermons which were to me largely incomprehensible. Today when Neil Kinnock speaks I have only to close my eyes and I am taken back all those years.

The Labour and trade union movement is alarmingly myopic. It prefers frontal attack to circumvention and suffers the same fate as the Japanese kamikaze pilot or Iranian revolutionary guard. It chose Michael Foot when everyone knew he was a loser, and fights elections on a ragbag of lost causes. Received wisdom has it that a major cause of Labour's defeat was its support for gays and blacks, but I find this much too simplistic. I think far more damage has been done by the left's espousal of feminist culture. On a simple numerical count of the 36 million adults of this country, some three million are black and perhaps a similar number are homosexual. There are, however, some 18 million men, many of whom must have been alienated by the sisters of the Virago Press. My disagreement is not with the feminist movement itself, but with certain feminist writers, some of whose comments on the Cleveland affair have even angered quite a number of my feminist friends.

I feel a sense of despair at all this. It is depressing that our country is presided over by a woman of limited intellect and an enfeebled cabinet, but I remain an optimist. Although I am 64 I still feel that I will live to see a more fair society and a government led by Bryan Gould.

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MEDIA

And now . . . the good news

Michael Leapman

COINCIDENCES can prove treacherous excuses for commentary but this one was irresistible. Last Monday evening, two parties were held in London to celebrate milestones in journalism. The weekly *New Society* marked its 25th anniversary with a bash in the unlikely setting of the Groucho Club in Soho: a defiantly 1980s venue for a magazine that is quintessentially a product of the 1960s. And on the other side of the city, staff and supporters of the *Independent* were congratulating each other on a remarkably successful first year, in terms of circulation if not yet of profit.

At Groucho's, Sixties liberals in suits and little black dresses quietly marvelled at the magazine's and their own survival. These are bruising times for the centre left, but at what other gathering would David Owen still be asked for his autograph? Owen also showed at the *Independent* party, in a large assembly hall hard by the paper's offices. No autographs there: the considerably younger crowd were too busy dancing to loud music and complaining that they weren't allowed to bring their spouses.

It was a good night, all told, for those of us anxious about the health of journalism. Much space in the *New Statesman* and elsewhere is devoted to bemoaning the state of the British press. We cluck at the tabloids' nipple counts, their sensationalism, their increasingly strident and distorted political coverage. Yet the good news is that the tabloids' share of the total newspaper market is declining, if slowly.

Since its launch a year ago by three journalists from the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Independent* has built a circulation of some 360,000 — up from 257,000 at its low point in January. Yet its two chief rivals, the *Times* and *Guardian*, have during that period lost only about 100,000 between them, while the *Daily Telegraph* and *Financial Times* have gained around 50,000 each. This means that quality newspaper readership has increased over the last year by roughly the figure of the *Independent*'s circulation. Some of these new readers have come from the middle ground, where the *Mail* and *Express* are both doing poorly. Others are now clearly taking the *Independent* alongside their former regular paper, and some are first-time buyers: nearly a quarter of its readers are under 24, a much higher proportion than anyof its rivals can boast.

> ***Bucking the fashionable cynicism in this age of bourgeois triumphalism, the editor of the* Independent, *Andreas Whittam-Smith, has taken principled stands on important professional issues***

There is equally encouraging news from the serious weekly press. *Sunday Sport* is not the only weekly paper doing well. The new appetite for informed journalism has seen the *New Statesman, Spectator, Listener* and *New Society* all increasing their circulation over the last year, if only modestly.

New Society hit its peak in the early 1970s, when local councils were expanding their social services departments and universities hurrying to establish chairs of sociology. The magazine's unique mixture of academic analysis and reporting from the social battlefields served its audience well. Came the 1980s and it failed to adapt fast enough to the Thatcherite squeeze on public spending and the overall loss of faith in social engineering. It was on its uppers and within an ace of being shut down in 1984, when the *New Statesman* took it under its wing.

For a while, things got worse. In 1985 *New Society* lost £250,000 on a turnover of £750,000. Since then it has changed editorial direction, giving more space to journalists and less to academics. Ownership is now shared between the *New Statesman* and the Rowntree Trust and it makes a small profit. Much is hoped from its autumn redesign.

IF *NEW SOCIETY* has had to find ways of coming to terms with the 1980s, the *Independent* is very much a product of this designer decade. It has succeeded in establishing itself as the most up-to-the-minute of the quality dailies in presentational terms, yet at the same time a repository of many of the traditional virtues of serious journalism. During the last week, generous tributes have been paid to it, but some are baffled as to the secret of its success. In the *Observer* Richard Brooks wrote that 'its news priorities sometimes favour the worthy'. In this age of bourgeois triumphalism, 'worthy' is a term of abuse. Yet I think it is precisely because the *Independent* favours the worthy over the unworthy that it is attractive to so many readers.

Bucking the fashionable cynicism, the editor, Andreas Whittam-Smith, has taken principled stands on important professional issues. Most publicly, he defied the government by printing tales out of *Spycatcher*. He declared that his political reporters would not take part in the corrupt system of lobby briefings. He does not allow his staff to accept free travel or hospitality from organisations they are writing about.

The latter two may seem negative virtues, but I believe readers are drawn to a paper as much by what it does not do as by what it does. This is why many have deserted *The Times* for the *Independent*. In Charles Wilson, *The Times* has an editor who came from the *Daily Mail* and brought over several staff. Rupert Murdoch clearly sees the *Mail* as a repository of journalistic virtue. The result has been a needed improvement in the competence of *The Times*'s news gathering, but at the cost of an unsettling breathlessness about the coverage, an emphasis on crime, show business, sex, drugs — and horse racing, Wilson's special enthusiasm. (All the same, vulgarisation has not set in to the extent it has on the *Sunday Times*, where this week's Atticus column — mainly written, I gather, by the editor Andrew Neil himself — settled a doctrinal dispute with the *Observer* with the telling phrase, borrowed from its sister the *Sun*: 'Up yours.')

Any editor has to have an appreciation of what puts people off. *The Times* under William Rees-Mogg was flawed, but one of his strengths was being conscious of what readers would not wear. After one go at investigative journalism, when the paper uncovered a police corruption scandal, he received so many pained letters that he decided not to do it again. And he set his face against personal gossip: a limiting factor for his Diary writers. Similarly, when the *Independent* was some days behind the rest of the press in reporting George Galloway's priapic adventures in Greece, readers might have felt it a fault in the right direction.

THE INDISCRIMINATE Murdoch formula of trying to appeal to the broadest cross-section of the populace fails to take account of the intimate nature of the relationship between readers and their morning paper. Choosing a paper is like choosing a spouse. A man may be witty, wealthy, successful and superbly endowed physically; yet if he also picks his nose over breakfast, a woman may prefer to marry someone of less dazzling accomplishment, with whom she is safe from such unseemliness.

> ***The* Independent *is a comfortable newspaper, designed for the gratifyingly substantial number of people for whom "Up yours" is an unsatisfactory way of concluding an argument***

The *Independent* is a comfortable newspaper, designed for the gratifyingly substantial number of people to whom 'Up yours' is an unsatisfactory way of concluding an argument. But not all its virtues are bland. Whittam-Smith took the unfashionable decision to invest heavily in foreign news and has more overseas staffers than his rivals. Political coverage is easily as informed as that dependent on lobby briefings. Theatre and cinema listings set a standard of user-friendliness that has forced rival papers to match them.

The mood at its party was sanguine but realistic. The paper is still losing money and nobody thinks the circulation can go on rising steeply without a check. For one thing, its rivals will seek to strike back. Murdoch has already been trying to lure away some key staff; so far he has failed but he will persevere. There are testing battles ahead, but in its first year the *Independent* has done an immense amount of good for an industry and a profession demoralised by creeping Murdochisation. □

Freelance writer Michael Leapman has a one-day-in-five job share with the Media Editor of the Independent *and occasionally reviews books for* New Society. *He was on the* Times *for 12 years.*

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The clods of the marketplace

PHILLIP WHITEHEAD *replies to last week's media column by David Graham; Graham argued that media 'Fabianism' - which he identified with Whitehead - had to be dethroned in favour of a discovery of 'new forms of popular culture'*

WE HAVE BEEN here before. Those who want to refashion the future out of an alternative past usually mask their lack of originality by an exaggeration of the shortcomings of the present. David Graham, fresh from his starring role in the Downing Street seminar on broadcasting, has prefaced his thesis there by belabouring Fabian paternalism, as though it was the central strand in that distrust of popular taste which he sees as standing against the light of the free market. He ought to remember that it was a strong strand in the thinking of the right, before the economic liberals took it over. It was T. S. Eliot, no Fabian, who told the Pilkington Committee that 'those who say they will give the public what it wants begin by underestimating public taste, and end by debauching it.'

It suits the new right, however, to pretend that it is the left which is the scourge of choice and diversity in broadcasting. David Graham quotes my warning at Edinburgh about the current fashion for 'the gods of the Market Place' with disdain. He seems to have nodded off before I went on to say that broadcasters have to come to terms with consumer sovereignty, cannot make programmes primarily for peer group approval or an isolated sense of public improvement. Markets are a necessary condition of good broadcasting. They are important because audiences are important, telling us in multifarious ways what people choose. David Graham knows perfectly well that extensions of choice, testing out new markets rather than recapturing jaded appetites for more of the same, have come out of the public service tradition he now chooses opportunistically to deride. He knows that the impetus for independent production is not coming from a handful of deregulators and right-wing ideologues. It is broadly based, and it goes with a healthy tradition in British broadcasting which the ideologues quite rightly fear.

That is the tradition that innovations of structure should extend the totality of choice, in a framework of regulated diversity. The introduction of random new elements, or the deliberate destruction of the balance between what we already have is not something to be done frivolously. That applies to the introduction of cable and satellite, which David declines to mention in his eagerness to set ITV and BBC1 at each other's throats in a war for what will be a smaller relative share of advertising revenue. It applies, too, to the coming change in the relationship between production and commission in both the ITV companies and the BBC.

The Graham package, for such a troubadour of the free market, is as cramped as it is terrestrial. He wants to turn the ITV franchises over to 'publishing houses', thereby breaking up the production base of the larger companies which are now moving into film making and satellite consortia. He wants ads on BBC1, and the licence fee kept for BBC2. He anticipates a network of local TV stations also financed by advertising. And he would leave Channel 4 alone, to await the full glory of privatisation at some future date.

Television's role

Can that be all? So much invective expended on what we have now, so that television can 'send people to bed feeling good' — as though happiness was the key product for which it is the supreme selling medium. Television is not only there to make people feel good, although its role in amusing, entertaining, provoking conversation and remembered pleasure is enormously important. It should also be able to send people to bed feeling moved, even ashamed by what it has shown them. Its talents have to be employed more widely than a market system dominated by a few media giants intent on the best way to package Bill Cosby. Does David watch the mindless hours of bad soap and ritual humiliation by quiz show which sends the audience to bed feeling lobotomised? Does he talk to the production teams in public broadcasting in the US about their abject trawl for funds to provide an alternative, in this richest of societies? I expect he does because he wants to preserve a licence-financed BBC2 and a levy-financed Channel 4 in Britain.

These discrete sources of funding would not stay protected for long. No public broadcasting system in the Commonwealth which has introduced advertising has thereafter maintained the proportion of income which initially comes from licence revenue. It shrinks inexorably, an easy target for governments who argue that its advertising revenue should increase. And in a world of cut-throat competition for advertising revenue, the ITV companies' share will fall. Well before that they will be clamouring for release from the subscription they have to pay to Channel 4. It will then be the companies who want Channel 4 to stand alone, if it has not been privatised already. David is right to want to preserve Channel 4, although it is markedly inconsistent with his free market views. It has, after all, nurtured small entrepreneurs like himself in a protected environment unknown elsewhere in British television, since the attitude of the duopoly to the Independent programme supplier was until recently one of fastidious disdain.

That contempt, though, is as nothing compared to the brute force of the new oligopolists. Free marketeers have two answers to the problems of oligopoly. They can invoke anti-trust laws and pray in aid Adam Smith's comments on the natural tendency of capitalists to raise prices, or they can brush the problem aside as one of little importance. David Graham casts a token glance in each direction. Murdoch and Maxwell, he admits, are 'powerful men', but there is 'no evidence that cultural industries tend to concentrate'. Let me give him some. In Italy Berlusconi built up total dominance in a very few years across the whole range of private de-regulated television. In Britain both local radio and cable television are already in far fewer hands than they were when they began. In France privatisation has opened the way for the dominant Hersant chain to buy its way into television too.

These organisations aim for vertical integration — the evil which David Graham identifies with the adipose ITV companies in Britain. They want to be able to use their own film libraries, their own production and their own outlets, endlessly recycling material on national television, cable and satellite. It is their nature to accumulate, to digest opposition, and they do it with the appetite and moral sentiment of a boa constrictor.

The need for regulation

It may be that we can do very little about this tendency to concentrate without action at a European level. But to deny that it is a problem seems to me wilful stupidity. Our anti-trust laws are feeble. In the hands of a compliant government they are useless. Up to now British television, for all its inadequacies and resistance to technical change and market preference, has had its diversity protected by *intervention* in the market. That has prevented the cruder takeover bids, has provided some frame of reference for the kind of programmes transmitted to be judged by promises made or public policy articulated. It has also allowed new forces into this regulated market 'mimicking', in Alan Peacock's phrase, the market that unrestrained consumer preference would develop. We now have a new task; how to introduce entirely new broadcasting forms in a way which will be a stimulant to innovation and good practice, not a solvent to quality and integrity of purpose.

One of the oddities of oligopoly which free marketeers seldom care to admit is that its practitioners come to resemble the worst features of unresponsive state enterprise. The broadcasting/entertainment/information complex is no exception. A British television system which is not locked into the production imperatives of international media groups, which can eliminate waste and encourage innovation, will not come about without regulation.

The right are beginning to discover that consumer power translates into a demand for regulatory intervention, to preserve choice as well as to extend it. If we want a system in which a healthy and independent BBC has the courage and clout to make and commission material of national character and international quality, a commercial system which eschews cartels and accepts competition at the local level from a new range of local television and a Channel 4 supplied by not 50 but 350 enterprises, including Diverse Productions, we will best ensure it by regulation — regulation to enable differences, rather than de-regulation to entrench similarity, of method, of finance, of product. □

Phillip Whitehead is a director of Brook Productions and Chairman of The Statesman and Nation Publishing Co.

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SEMIOTICS

No this, no that: please go away

DUNCAN CAMPBELL *reads the signs of our times*

'NO JUST SITTING allowed', says the sign in the Hackney launderette. This is in the great tradition of signs in commercial premises which goes back to the '50s and a pub on Hanover Street in Edinburgh which used to say 'No singing, no dancing,' and to which a customer had added the words 'and no enjoying yourself.'

The Hackney launderette sign is chiefly a cold weather sign, aimed at keeping out the chilly poor who prefer the hurly-burly of the tumble dry to the restraints of the public library as a way of staying warm during the winter daytime.

This, of course, says a bit about Hackney and about launderette owners and, in fact, it is quite possible nowadays to travel all over Britain, without reading newspapers or watching the television or talking to anyone and still have a very good idea of what is happening in the country, socially, economically and politically, just from looking at signs.

In north and east London, for instance, you will notice a growth in the number of 'No travellers' or 'No gypsies' signs. Sometimes the more genteel signs say 'Sorry, no travellers' as though they would love to have them but just can't squeeze them in right now.

If you ask the publicans why they have these signs they give you a variety of explanations: travellers drink too much, put other customers off, don't spend any money and smell. You could say the same things about, respectively, journalists, rugby supporters, old-age pensioners and people who have garlic for supper and don't wash their teeth vigorously enough, but none are as yet excluded by category. The main reason is that you can't shove up 'No Irish, No Coloureds' signs any more and this is the handiest replacement.

One local pub which used to appeal for tolerance because it had a punky clientele now has, I noted this week, a sign saying 'Sorry, no travellers' and, below it, 'Sorry no dogs'. The fact that the function of pubs historically has been to provide sustenance for the traveller seems to have got lost somewhere. The same pub has a sign outside its disco entrance that says: 'Dress and behaviour strictly observed', presumably indicating that this is an anthropologists' hangout and your costume and body language will be monitored and eventually become a thesis.

The lovely village of Dedham in the Constable country of Essex has a 'No leather jackets' sign in one its pubs, aimed presumably at Hells Angels, bikers, heavy metal fans and middle-aged Scandinavian tourists. (The bars in Alice Springs, Australia, have, according to Bruce Chatwin's book, *Songlines* — in post-Biden days we must attribute — signs saying 'No thongs'. This is to keep out Aborigines.)

Up in Glencoe you could see a hotel which had a sign saying 'No hawkers or Campbells'. This, I'm sure, was meant as a joke and is only sad because it is based on historical myth about the Campbells propagated by people who see Scottish history as a kilted version of Chicago in the '30s; they're more to be pitied than scolded.

In the doghouse

On the domestic sign front, I have noticed a dramatic rise, particularly on council estates, of pictures of Alsatian dogs with the words 'I live here' beside them. When I first saw it, I thought it was a rather touching acknowledgement of an animal's right to an identity. Then I saw the same Alsatian's face appearing in three or four different flats. Either this was another clear example of how council house sales could be exploited or else it was a warning to would-be burglars. I started examining them more carefully and noticed that behind the smiling face and long tongue there was an undertow of menace in the jaw. Still, if you are constantly being barred from pubs you might look that way too.

In the gentrified areas of our big cities there has been a boom in signs that state that 'This house is protected by Securikill', or somesuch. This is a courteous way of informing burglars what system to use and how it is disconnected, much on the same lines as signs inside your car tell you what oil has been used.

Often outside these houses are parked cars with signs in their windows saying 'This car is protected by Car-Custodian'. This means: 'This vehicle will make an irritating noise for three minutes as you try to break into it. No one will actually stop you from taking it, however. Probably the reverse, as the chances are that they're fed up with hearing it go off all the time.'

'Only two schoolboys' was one sign that puzzled me when I first saw it appearing in the windows of newsagents. It seemed so sad, like that song 'Only the lonely'. It was only after I saw the expanded version 'Only two schoolboys at one time' that I realised that so depraved has the country become that teams of school children now run riot in newsagents. Now I like the snappy 'Limit: two schoolboys' which has the same sort of no-nonsense feel to it as a low bridge sign.

Sexual shorthand

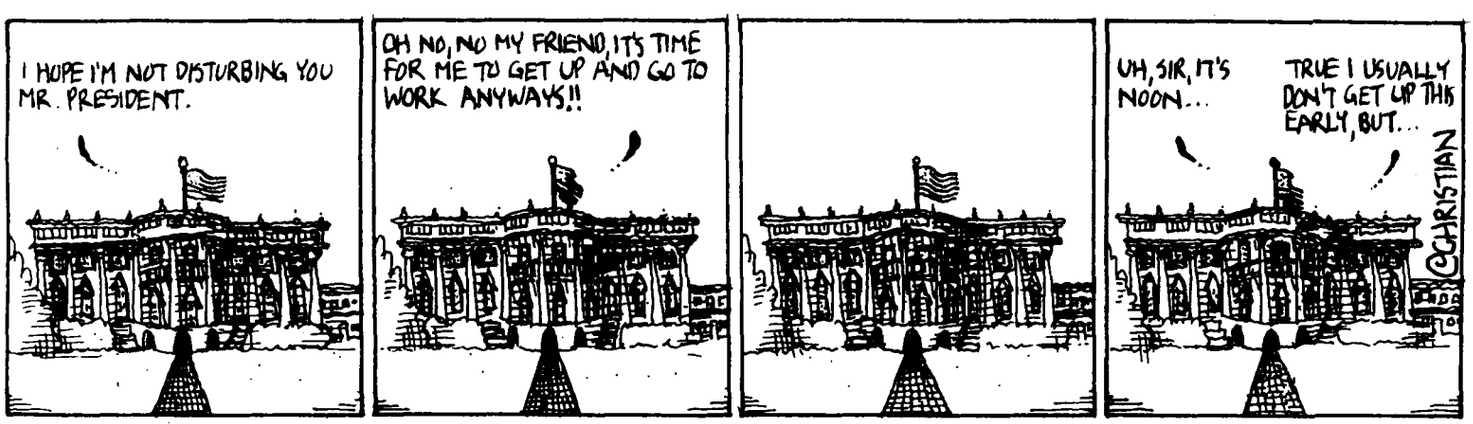
The enormous number of signs that advertise jobs available for bar staff are a clear indication that Britain is now largely out to lunch and a firmer indication that having to serve the British is not something that people want to do for any length of time. Not that all the window-ad jobs are unskilled. A record shop in Notting Hill is currently seeking a 'fulltime security guard with wide knowledge of pop music and/or Hi Fi and musical instruments'.

Study of newsagents' windows is, of course, one of the best barometers of a neighbourhood. Is it an area that wants 'au pairs' or 'child-minders'? How many 'same day loans' signs are there? Round Holloway, in north London, these loan signs have now started to overtake the 'Corrective massage' ads, unless 'loans' is some kind of sexual shorthand that I haven't come across yet.

(I used to work at a London magazine which had a large number of personal ads. To spare blushes advertisers used a fairly common sexual shorthand — S/M meant sado-masochism, TV meant transvestite and so on. The lawyer whose job it was to vet the paper for libel, blasphemy and so on was alerted by colleagues to the fact that he was permitting the advertisement of such things as sado-masochism which could be a breach of the law. He had always believed that S/M meant 'small' and TV just meant that the advertiser had access to a television. He was shocked. The following week he had removed all such references and also all ads that had indicated that all letters would be answered — he had assumed that ALA must have some sexual significance too.)

Anyway, the sign-readers travelling this land could spot a country in the grip of fear about bikers, schoolboys, burglars, travellers, the poor, the cold and the leathery. Signs of the times. □

The author is a freelance writer, not to be confused with the Duncan Campbell on the NS *Staff.*


I HOPE I'M NOT DISTURBING YOU MR. PRESIDENT.
OH NO, NO MY FRIEND, IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GET UP AND GO TO WORK ANYWAYS!!
UH, SIR, IT'S NOON...
TRUE I USUALLY DON'T GET UP THIS EARLY, BUT...
©CHRISTIAN

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ARTS

CINEMA

In the pink

Judith Williamson

Lesbian and Gay Film and Video
Tyneside Film Festival; NFT
The Lesbian Vampire in Film
Tyneside; Ritzy Brixton
Underground Canada
Tyneside; NFT; Canada House; London Filmmakers Co-op
November Moon
Tyneside; NFT; ICA

Coming out of captivity, in Alexandra von Grote's *November Moon*

WHERE, IN A CULTURE which suppresses homosexuality, do lesbian and gay concerns surface in cinema? A diverse collection of events during the next month provides answers to this question in different ways. Mainstream cinema frequently deflects 'deviant' sexualities into the corners of genre forms; whether sublimated into the male buddy movie, or, more overtly, into those genres whose stories and symbolism allow for stylised representations of sexuality, like horror or vampire movies.

It is well known that within the latter genre 'initiated' women will prove as avid as Dracula himself in pouncing on nubile female bodies: this is practically the only area of popular cinema where lesbians are seen at all — ambiguously portrayed as at once strong, independent, and predatory. The lesbian vampire film is the subject of a presentation by Andrea Weiss at the Tyneside Festival and the Ritzy Cinema next week, with screenings of a variety of films including *The Hunger*; one issue under discussion will be the extent to which genre films can be re-read, reinterpreted subversively by lesbian and gay audiences. This kind of appropriation has been a crucial aspect of the relationship of gay culture to mainstream cinema — a topic explored most richly in some of Richard Dyer's writing on film *(Stars, Heavenly Bodies)*.

Appropriation also works the other way. Straight romance is becoming rather threadbare in opportunities for the kinds of obstacles, misunderstandings, parental and social disapproval that used to fan the flames of traditional movie romances, but now, with films like *Desert Hearts*, or *My Beautiful Laundrette*, the thrill of transgression can be rekindled as gay romance against the backdrop of a repressive society.

Maurice, the Merchant-Ivory version of E. M. Forster's novel (at Tyneside, and on general release next month) fits this formula nicely — and with its central affair never consummated, most of the love-making is done by the camera to the accoutrements of upper-class life — Cambridge colleges, well-kept lawns and sherry decanters. It is interesting to compare this film, or *Another Country*, with *Prick Up Your Ears*: working-class homosexuality can be offered up as *Carry-On* camp comedy, but upper-class sex lives must be shown as unbearably sensitive and serious. (Of course, the bearer of 'earthy' sexuality in *Maurice* is, as in *Lady Chatterley*, the gamekeeper.) Interesting in its portrayal of a repressed, Platonic love between men, the film's sensibility remains rooted in class, rather than gay, culture.

On the other hand, the lesbian and gay section at Tyneside (repeated as the NFT's 'Gay Lives' season) brings us a collection of film and video from within gay cultures around the world. *The Outsiders* (Yu Kan-Ping) is an extraordinarily moving film from Taiwan, following the story of a young man thrown out of home for 'unnatural acts'. Ah-Ching finds refuge in the city's gay scene, and along with other stray boys forms a kind of substitute family under the kindliness of an older gay man and his sympathetic landlady.

The film's use of lighting and colour gives it a very particular aesthetic, rather like the quality of neon seen through rain. The gay scene centres on a park, where, as lovers seek and are sought, blue, cavernous light falling in shafts through the trees gives the feeling of being underground — a feeling reinforced less metaphorically by the police raid. But although the 'outsiders' are, most of the time, literally outside, the film's visual effects leave you with a sense of the softness of the park at night compared to the harshness of conventional family life.

There seems to be greater scope for campness and tongue-in-cheek in films from the more established gay cultures. From the US West Coast, two shorts from Gus Van Sant *(Mala Noche)* combine humour and poignancy — I particularly liked *My New Friend*, a sort of one-home-movie-stand. Most gut-wrenchingly funny are the shorts by David Weissman, *Beauties Without a Cause* and *976-Dish*. As the dial-a-gossip Dish says, 'Can you *believe* David Weissman *still* makes these cheap 2-minute films?' Yes, and it is the witty use of their cheapness — as when the Beauties 'drive' in a stationary car — that makes them so exhilaratingly camp.

Another strong centre of lesbian and gay filmmaking is Toronto, and three excellent programmes of film and video called 'Underground Canada' play at Tyneside, before coming to London. Also at Tyneside is *The Law of Desire* an extraordinary film by Spanish director Pedro Almodovar. Its tone recalls Hermosillo's work: the film confronts not only sexuality in every form but also death, and yet remains wildly, crazily funny.

An important project of gay filmmaking has always been to claim its own eroticism, and the Tyneside/NFT programme gives an airing to the cult film *Pink Narcissus* — an extended erotic fantasy which shows that sexiness doesn't mean just sex. A close-up of a blade of grass trailed across skin, a hand caressing beads on a string — the repertoire of imagery is both inventive and, again, funny.

Humour is something that feminists, particularly lesbian feminists, are supposed to lack, but Caroline Sheldon's *17 Bedrooms or, What Do Lesbians Do In Bed?* proves otherwise. What *do* lesbians do in bed? Read, eat breakfast, sleep, play Scrabble — this film denies the voyeuristic pleasure that sex between women has so often provided not only within porn genres but within art film. As Mandy Merck has pointed out in an essay on *Lianna*, love between women can

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provide the thrill of the forbidden *and* the satisfaction of being 'progressive' required by the art movie genre.

Alexandra von Grote's *November Moon* manages to avoid any such smug voyeurism as it follows the emotional and social lives of two women, one of them Jewish, in occupied France during the war. The film is elegantly if conventionally made — from the Virago Modern Classic school of film making. But not only does it sidestep glib formulae about fascism and sexuality, its key images send out resonances which go beyond their immediate place in the plot.

November, the Jewish woman, is forced to go underground in her lover's apartment, hiding in an excruciatingly small cavity under a sofa when guests — including Nazis — come round. To avoid arousing suspicions, her lover also takes up with an old admirer who writes for a Nazi paper, pretending to be both straight, and sympathetic to the new order. The painful concealment of an actual woman who literally can't 'come out', and the social cost — her lover has her head shaved after the war for 'collaborating' — hits a note of fear that must have meaning for anyone who has ever been in the closet. □

THEATRE

Women beware women

Paul Allen

It's a Girl!
JOHN BURROWS *Duke's Playhouse, Lancaster*
The Children's Room
LILLIAN HELLMAN *Derby Playhouse*
The Innocent Mistress
MARY PIX *Derby Playhouse*

SO YOU'RE A MALE playwright of impeccably feminist principles and commitment. What do you write about? The Miracle of Childbirth? The Menace of Nuclear Power? Why not — here's a clever thing — combine the two and tell the story of an 'ordinary' young woman stirred to fight two parallel campaigns, one for the right to a home birth, the other against a plan to dump nuclear waste in her village? And if her husband opposes the first and actually works for the contractor implementing the second — because of grievous unemployment in the North — then all the right issues will come up like a row of cherries on a fruit machine.

I have no wish to be harsh on *It's a Girl!* It is an infectiously good-humoured and sometimes joyful expression of things that John Burrows clearly believes in sincerely. It has some good jokes, winning performances and attractive a cappella singing by a cast of five women. It is clearly well suited to the community tour it has completed, it made going to the Duke's Playhouse the sheer pleasure I had been widely advised it would be and I see no reason why it should not prove equally palatable at the Bush in London where it arrives on 20 October.

But going to Derby the following night to see a long-overdue revival of Lillian Hellman's **The Children's Room** I couldn't help thinking how much more grown-up the older play was. Here too the cast is (bar one) all female but Hellman is considerably less in awe of her own sex than Burrows. She accepts that some of them may behave badly; indeed if there is to be much in the way of dramatic conflict some of them will have to. In contrast, and like those wonderfully liberal plays by white writers that have faultlessly dignified black characters, *It's a Girl!* attacks one set of prejudices by substituting another.

Where conflict does come it is half-hearted. The husband is more simple-minded than hostile. The nearest thing to a villain is the site foreman, a blustering Scot who fought in the Falklands where there were real men around. But whenever either man, represented by women in the cast, reaches a point of genuine confrontation the play itself backs away, cutting to the next scene as soap operas do on television. (Only in the theatre you don't get the full gamut of Significant Looks in place of a major row).

The play is soft in other ways too. Linda (Jane Nash) wants her baby at home partly because it's what her mother did and partly because she wants to do something on her own. She wants to be in charge of her own body and so she should, in so far as a pregnant woman is in charge of her body in the conventional sense. Nobody argues for the right to have your baby in hospital, hard won by generations of earlier feminists and perhaps under threat now; nobody wonders if nuclear power at its best might not save the lives of a lot of miners.

Now the nuclear industry and conventional health practices can speak up for themselves. It is simply that in the otherwise mixed and otherwise lively group of ante-natal women who are giving us this play it would be reassuring to find a bit more dramatic tension.

Tension stands out on Annie Castledine's near-faultless production of *The Children's Room* like a vein throbbing on the face of an apoplectic sergeant-major. Sometimes, indeed, it seems as if the plot is teetering over the edge into melodrama, but I came away convinced that in our cool and ironic late-20th-century way we had gone so far towards avoiding melodrama that we have avoided drama too.

The play is set in a New England school, run by two women. It is happy and successful until one child, made into a kind of monster by her own misery and an over-indulgent grandmother, takes revenge for a punishment by saying the teachers are lesbians. In the pious persecution that follows, one teacher is destroyed utterly and the other loses everything worthwhile in her life.

If the play were written now it might reasonably argue: so what if they are lesbians? In 1934, when it was first produced, it had the honourable but now less resonant purpose of dealing with the news filtering through from Germany of witch-hunts against first Jews then other social 'undesirables'. None of this much matters. Hellman has

Alec McCowen

FATHERS AND SONS

premiere of a new play by Brian Friel after the novel by Ivan Turgenev

"Nowhere else in the world will you find ensemble acting of this caliber"
International Herald Tribune

"A PLAY FOR TODAY" *Guardian*

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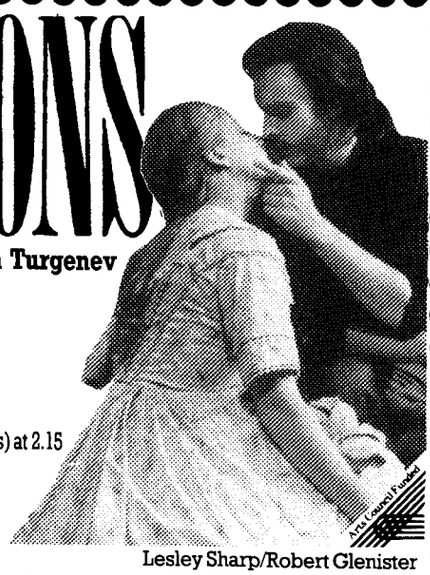
Lesley Sharp/Robert Glenister

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constructed a play of quite compelling emotional weight and though not quite all of the Derby cast can bear the burden the writer imposes, the central trio — Charlotte Barker as the lumpen child, Sally Edwards and Barbara Marten as the teachers — deliver acting of the highest quality. One example: Hellman has a line about the apparent withdrawing from a touch by the seemingly loyal fiancé of one of the women: there is an entire symphony of body language in progress throughout the play to make convincing sense of this. It isn't a matter of hysterical gesture and movement, simply of a stretched hand here, a recoil there, twisted fingers, a flounce betraying false dignity and so on.

There are problems about the play. The male character is weakly drawn, the plot sometimes stretches the imagination, the Freudian psychology is a little simple. But it is daring and moving.

Mary Pix's **The Innocent Mistress** was first seen in London in 1697, praised by some, condemned for obscenity by others and then forgotten until Fidelis Morgan part-rescued it in her book *The Female Wits*. In Annie Castledine's opening production at Derby, it seemed to me like many Restoration comedies written by men, only less funny than the better ones.

Did Mary Pix give it a woman's point of view? Only, I think, in showing that women did less well than men when it came to choosing their fate; but neither did very well and it had more to do with wealth and class than gender anyway as far as her plot was concerned. The company seemed less than secure and the loudest laughs on the first night were for actors falling over on an over-elaborate set. The best part was demonstrably for a man — Stifyn Parri as the Machiavellian Spendall — and I feared for a season in which every play seemed to be intended to put women at the centre of the stage (even *Gaslight*, which comes next, is a Victorian thriller about a woman victim). *The Children's Room* triumphantly re-establishes that purpose. □

TELEVISION

Fleurs du mall

Hugo Williams

LE CORBUSIER would have loved the American shopping malls on **Equinox: Malltime** (C4), except he would have had the mallies sleep in them too, or under them rather; after all, who wants to look out at the world after it's dark? In America, there's not much world left to look out at and what there is doesn't interest these mall rats and body-snatcher mutants, 'born to shop'.

Poor old Corb's collected architectural wisdoms, bravely raked together by Stephen Gardiner for **Le Corbusier** (C4), sounded like The First Epistle To The Vandals. 'It's a great illusion that people want to have houses at street level where there is nothing but dust, exhaust fumes and dogs' messes . . .' What they do want, of course, is tower blocks like beached liners with distant views of happiness, communal TV aerials and in-house shopping malls and services, like fully-mechanised piggeries. His was the archetypal failed artist's world-domination dream, disguised as 'planning'. Beware of little men with coprophobia! I shall make a point of treading in the first dog mess I see and carrying it respectfully indoors on my shoes, my tribute to the *ad hoc, alfresco*, anti-social life.

No shit in the shopping malls, unnaturally, unless it is human, and God knows what *that* would be composed of. Twenty-five years ago these tacky wonderworlds didn't exist. Now there are more enclosed shopping centres in the USA than there are schools, cities, hospitals, hotels or courthouses (gospel according to *TV Times*, therefore dubious). As one mall-creator explained, the automobile has liberated us (them) from the natural world, allowing us to travel freely from one theme environment to another, like migrating angler fish. 'I've got this great fantasy,' cried a mall-rat, 'that the mall is my home, my own personal space-ship. I could zoom around the world in it with no one to bother me'.

In this brilliant, *Mondo Cane*-esque gibbet of a film, director George Haggerty showcased some genuine one-off creampuffs, weird even by American standards. One deranged ecstatic prepares herself for the 'mall experience' by doing hyper-ventilating exercises, 'to get enough oxygen into my brain', while singing her own version of 'The Happy Wanderer':

> I am a happy walking girl
> I love to hike the malls
> And as I go I love to shop
> And shop and shop and shop.

'I would like to show you what I bought today', she says. 'Do you like it? It's a pith helmet! A symbol of the modern woman,' (Puts it on her head.) 'That's what they should do — make their money and come and walk and spend every day in the mall.' She wasn't kidding. She has started her own mall-cruiser's newsletter with the pith helmet as symbol of the happy hiking girl who gets off her arse and mall-cruises all day.

A subscriber in silver lamé cruising-gear and sarconiums admired the philosophy of authoress Tammy Baker, who had breast-implants, wears make-up and a wig to bed and claims, 'You don't have to be drab to be a Christian.' The middle-aged teenybopper had Tammy as her permit to cruise the malls without annoying God. 'I *like* men, you know what I mean? My husband and I aren't getting along, so I just hang loose here, see what comes up. You like may nails? I love my nails! They make me feel so feminine! My girlfriend has a sarconium implanted in one.' She showed us her purchase for the day, a plastic rose with a red light bulb and a rose smell.

Shopping malls, we learnt, offer 'new stages of hyper-reality to shoppers.' Reality has its detrimental aspects, so in the Mall everything is reduced to a theme, one of which is 'Christianity', a light-up rose symbolising the blood of Christ, shed for shoppers.

Two groups are excluded from God's Kingdom: Mexicans and the homeless. The reason for this will be obvious to anyone who loves theme environments: 'their presence would form a barrier to the ecology of fantasy.' The exception to this rule is the world's only living cigar-store Indian, who poses for shops in the full rig, staring into nothing. 'My record is five hours without blinking. Kids'll poke me in the eye. I like to, like, fall over. I love to hear the women scream.' (Drives away in a Cadillac.)

The transition to commercials is imperceptible: 'Nowhere in the world is quite like the World of Leather. You either have it or you don't'. Less smooth, though no less logical, is a switch to **The Politics of Food** (ITV), a series looking at food production in a world where millions die of hunger each year, yet production exceeds demand. America is now experiencing its worst depression since the 1930s. Encouraged in the '70s to expand by borrowing, the farms now owe the banks two billion. One in three are devoted to export to countries who can't afford to buy because of their own loan repayments. One hundred farms foreclose each week. Some cling on by accepting the government's maintenance rent on grain mountains, while an estimated twenty million Americans are currently starving. Family suicides and bank-manager-slayings are increasing; only farm machinery wrecking yards flourish.

To hear the Republican senator smiling this off as part of an overall masterplan was almost as funny as watching, with the sound turned down, our own Minister for the Environment wriggling on the latest batch of inner-city blight documentaries. Why doesn't he open a string of theme environment shopping malls, to stimulate the ecology of fantasy? □

the digger

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Books

SEX

Why don't we do it in the road?

Leslie Dick

Re-making Love: The Feminization of Sex
BARBARA EHRENREICH, ELIZABETH HESS & GLORIA JACOBS *Fontana* £3.95

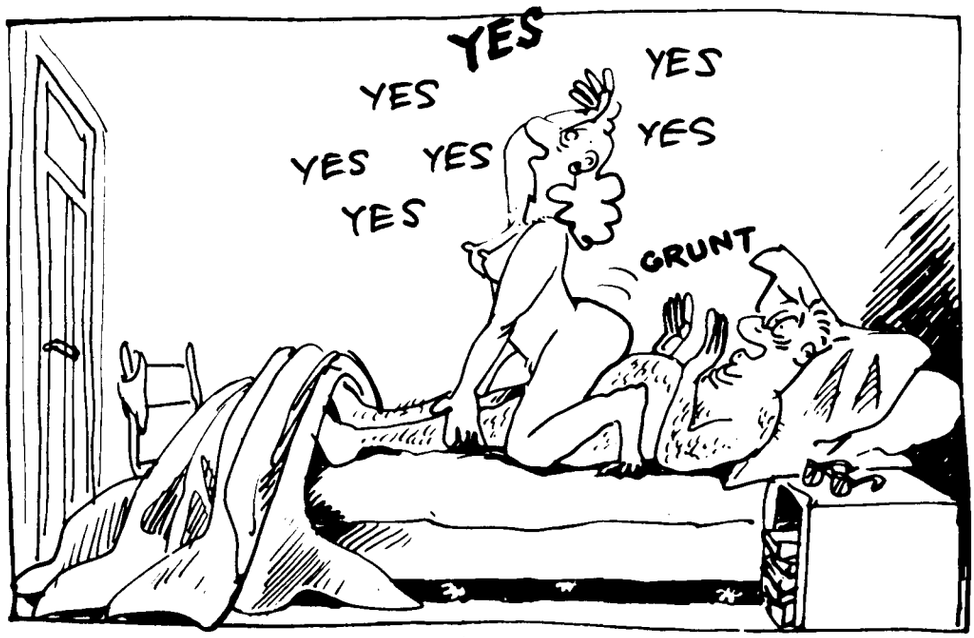
IN 1964, WHEN we were nine, my best friend and I played a secret game, enacting elaborate adventures in which we would take turns to be Paul McCartney or John Lennon. The story always ended with us 'falling in love': we would roll around on the floor, kissing passionately.

In *Re-making Love*, the roots of the Women's Liberation Movement are found in the rebellion against the female sexual predicament of the early 1960s, as evidenced by *Sex and the Single Girl*-ism (nice girls in big cities having affairs) and Beatlemania (which the authors see as a proto-feminist outburst against rigid gender roles and teenage sexual repression). Later, *Cosmopolitan* magazine and manuals like *The Joy of Sex*, with their 'reassuring' injunctions to experiment, to seek out the ideal orgasm and assert your 'right' to sexual pleasure, apparently brought non-feminist women into contact with euphoric feelings of self-determination and control. Indeed the authors claim it was at least party due to the 'sexual revolution' that feminism was not limited to a 'subculture of politicised, urban women', but moved into the mainstream of American culture and politics.

The book is only concerned with mainstream America — and one quickly longs for an interrogation of the whole idea of the 'mainstream', with its connotations of the Normal and the Average. The 'housewife in Ohio' reappears often, as does her counterpart, the 'professional' single in the city — it goes without saying they are both white, middle-class and heterosexual. In a sense the book is both *about* these women and addressed *to* them, despite their status as convenient sociological fictions. The authors state they will not tackle the thorny issues around homosexual and lesbian love, except as a 'sense of possibility', or source of sexual fantasy for the (normal) heterosexual woman.

That silent '(normal)' is present throughout the book, obscured by overt denunciations of 1950s sex manuals and their insistence on female sexual passivity. But the fundamental implication of *all* sex manuals is that sex can be (must be?) defined, 'fixed' and quantified, that there are achievable goals, definable expectations, alphabets and menus of sex: 'Twenty years ago the woman dissatisfied with sex was made to believe she was lacking something . . . Today . . . it is the woman who does not know how to negotiate or find her own way to pleasure who wonders if she is different, abnormal.' We call *this* liberation?

A grim picture emerges of the dutiful pursuit of



A TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES

Christmas is coming: go in to any bookshop and you'll see that the tables and spinners and shelves are beginning to fill with cartoon collections. Most, of course, will be bought to be wrapped and passed on as quickly as possible, but two that are being published this week deserve to be rescued from that party game: their authors, Claire Bretecher and Posy Simmonds (ex- ***Statesman*** **and** ***Guardian*** **respectively) are among the decade's shrewdest observers of lefty/yuppie behaviour. They draw it, however, with quite different pens. When a Bretecher woman and man go to bed, you would think they were fighting to the death; a man in bed with a Simmonds woman is more likely to be flossing his teeth. Indeed, the strips throughout PURE POSY (Cape, £7.95) are shaded by their author's sad hopefulness. Acutely aware of her characters' delusions and failures of socialist nerve, she nonetheless still cares terribly: about the poor, about gentrification, about the fate of the leg of spring lamb that breaks into 'Dem Bones' as Wendy Webber sticks the carving knife in. Bretcher's new, full-length cartoon novel, WHERE'S MY BABY NOW (trans. Angela Mason and Pat Fogarty, Methuen, £4.50), is composed of more linear slashes: at urban careerists, at rural reactionaries and — centrally — at surrogate motherhood as commerce. Its fierce imagination seems so French beside Simmonds' wistful Britishness that it's faintly annoying that the text's translators (otherwise very fine) should have felt the need to turn Paris into London, bars into pubs and** ***flics*** **into cops. (Harriett Gilbert)**

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sexual pleasure, as all over America 'equal partners' enter into bedroom negotiations over the exchange of labour necessary to produce this elusive thing, this final goal, the female orgasm. (Of course *male* sexual pleasure is supposed to be as simple as abc, but that's another story . . .) In the 1970s, one expert suggested that each couple acquire two copies of *The Joy of Sex*, his 'n' hers, and work their way through all the positions, scoring each with marks out of ten, and then exchange books. In this scenario, it's impossible even to say 'gee, I like that', as the sex manual becomes both the source of sex and the means of communicating a response.

Which is not to imply there's some *natural* sexuality somewhere that doesn't 'need' all these instructions; the hard information produced by the Kinsey Reports of 1948 and 1953, and the Hite Report of 1976, backed up by the purely physiological researches of Masters and Johnson (1966), was extremely useful to women long oppressed by myths of the vaginal orgasm, female sexual passivity, etc. One problem is that if you're going to be scientific about sex, you have to have something to count, something to measure: orgasms. Who dares say pleasure is not equivalent to orgasm? Stephen Heath's book *The Sexual Fix* (1982) shows how the official approval of experimentation in pursuit of the orgasm ('just so long as nobody gets hurt!') both functions as a definition of sexual expectation and overlooks the fact that psychic pain, like pleasure, isn't measured by electrodes and dials.

Nevertheless, *Re-making Love* presents an entertaining survey of sexology, from the 1948 book that describes sex for women as easier than falling off a log ('it is as easy as being the log itself'), to the 1982 'G-spot' and its resurrection of penetration as the way to ultimate female orgasm. The authors analyse the 1970s movement of S/M style and paraphernalia from the cities into the suburbs. Once everyone had bought their vibrators, S/M allowed a whole new range of sexual commodities to be marketed and consumed: 'From a strictly capitalist viewpoint, it is the ideal sexual practice.' Equally fascinating is the chapter on sex manuals for born-again Christians, which encourage the devout wife to dress up in costumes (thus sustaining her husband's interest and preserving monogamy) and to imagine herself as a 'love-slave to Christ', delighting in sexual submission.

Tragically, *Re-making Love* appears at a historical moment when the repercussions of the AIDS epidemic are changing the parameters of this debate. Biology wreaks havoc with ideology; as feminists we must continue to celebrate sexual pleasure, without ceasing to question the terms of our 'sexual liberation'. □

BIOGRAPHY

To speak its name

Andrew Lumsden

Oscar Wilde
RICHARD ELLMANN *Hamish Hamilton* £15

RICHARD ELLMANN, prize-winning biographer of Joyce and Yeats, died earlier this year, the proofs of his long-awaited Wilde around his bed. He will by now have been thanked personally by the Oscar he calls 'so generous, so amusing, and so right' in some celestial boulevard café, where erstwhile reviewers are allowed only to empty the ashtrays and not speak unless spoken to, and where no bill is ever presented.

Ellmann was a child of 'between 7 and 11' when he first felt enthralled by Wilde. He himself grew up to be 'as heterosexual as a man can be' and to be 'embarrassed' by the homosexual content of the narrative he so wanted to write, wrestling with the theme and with his research for over 30 years. 'The sense of exclusion, tied in with [his own] Jewishness, that's what he identified with,' says one of his daughters in a recent *Sunday Times* article on Ellmann by Roger Lewis.

Ellmann is the first person to decipher *exactly* what the semi-literate 9th Marquess of Queensberry (1844-1900) wrote on the famous visiting card left at Wilde's club on 18 February 1895: 'To Oscar Wilde posing Somdomite.' Importuned by the 24-year-old Lord Alfred Douglas (who thought he could put his Marquess father in the clink), 40-year-old Wilde sued for libel, as all the world knows. He lost and, by the night of 25 May 1895, was beginning two years hard labour, condemned under the 1885 'Labouchere amendment' which prohibited all sexual contact between males regardless of age, privacy or consent.

The imprisonment is harrowing: by November 1895 his nails were 'broken and bleeding . . . I should really not have known him at all' (Robbie Ross). By February 1896 he was 'an absolute wreck' (Constance Wilde). He fell in prison and died of the injury, an abscess within the ear, in November 1900, three years after release. He was beggared, his life's possessions sold for the lawyers. His two sons' patronyms were changed to Holland. I wish his living grandson Merlin Holland would change his surname back (Holland wasn't even Constance Wilde's maiden name).

Constance. She too had a fall (I didn't know this) at their Tite St House and was suffering a spinal injury throughout the trials until its effects killed her in 1898. In Reading jail Wilde contemplated a play *Constance* about a forgiving wife. Might not her ashes be brought back from Genoa? Perhaps a statue, too, near Emily Pankhurst's in Victoria Tower Gardens, as type of the agonised, loyal 'political wife'.

Henri Labouchere MP, editor of *Truth* and organiser of the 1885 law. Oscar got Lily Langtry's stage career going by appealing for help in 1881 to Labouchere's actress wife Henriette. Labouchere praised the youthful Wilde's 'aestheticism' but, by 1883, was attacking him in print for 'effeminacy'. It took, we see, a straight journalist to plunge Wilde first — all gays in Britain and the Imperial dependencies after — into the nightmare of the 1885 'blackmailers' charter'. *Plus ça change* in my sorry profession, whose own commemorative statue, on the Isle of Dogs, should be the said Henri sarcastically holding a copy of *Truth*.

Impulses of contrition beyond journalism (where it has never yet been exhibited) have now led two compassionate heterosexual men of much the same generation, H. Montgomery Hyde and Ellmann, to clear the factual ground about the life, trials and destruction of Wilde. A third such man, Leo Abse ex-MP, piloted the Commons amelioration of the 1885 law in 1967. Were it not for him, the way that I write would compel the police to put me under surveillance.

To straight male scholarship then — not, I fear, to gay — and to straight male Parliamentary skill, a post-Wildean debt. But we must move on, and not only in Parliament but in scholarship. Pellucid in prose, organisation and charity, Ellmann fails in interpretation. It is a measure of his own doubts that he relegates to a footnote his 'conviction' (Merlin Holland disputes it) that Wilde deteriorated from heterosexually-contracted syphilis when young and calls that 'central to my conception of Wilde's character'. This is no advance on Nordau's *Degeneration* (1895 edition) which cited Wilde and which Wilde himself read.

Let me concisely attempt what Ellmann did not see, or, if he saw, does not say. The clues pervade his pages, and Hyde's.

1) The 'snob Queer' Lord Rosebery (Queensberry letter 1894), briefly Liberal Prime Minister 1894/5, remembered in the Queensberry

Self-portrait in front of the television

Mark Wyatt

I recline horizontally, head propped up by an arm.
My eyes receive messages that seldom have much effect
On the rest of my body.
Sometimes I laugh or my left hand fidgets.

There are hazards; door-bell, telephone, neighbourly noise.
There is nothing worse than a monotonous bass-line
Thumping on the floor-boards from the flat downstairs
When you're watching a film.
I turn up the TV, become more public.

I like films that melt my personality.
I want to be lost in a daydreamer's world.
I want to drown in a Provence orchard
Watching a girl eating an apple
While pointing a gun at my head.

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family as the lover of Alfred Douglas' older brother Francis, had to be protected at all costs and is the reason why the prosecuting Solicitor-General and the Home Office were merciless in focusing obloquy and punishment onto Wilde. His death ('like all men unused to manual labour who receive a sentence of this kind he will be dead within two years': the governor of Reading jail) was as nearly conscious a State plot as makes no difference.

2) Francis Douglas killed himself in 1894 when forced into an engagement. That income and property centred compulsions to marriage for both men and women (Wilde's comedies blaze with masked bitterness about it and he himself married for cash and 'position') is *the* perspective to take while watching the catastrophe burgeon.

3) As to the specifically 'gay story': Wilde (b. 1854) ends a great line of Renaissance-style gays. In Alfred Douglas (b. 1870) we see that line collide, I suggest, with an early modern gay. The lovely defence of 'Socratic' affection which Oscar delivered from the dock was a prose re-phrasing of words of Marlowe's in 1592. Douglas' 'I am the love that dare not speak its name' was a direct slogan percursor of GLF. It was one of our pioneers who actually 'unmasked' Wilde deliberately, drove him 'out'. The modern movement has yet to acknowledge and to bear that one of the first of our activists, a rapacious and humourless one, crippled Wilde, flower of a tradition before ours, that we might be born. □

SOUTH AFRICA

Friends like these

Suzanne Cronje

South Africa Inc: The Oppenheimer Empire
DAVID PALLISTER, SARAH STEWART and IAN LEPPER *Simon & Schuster* £12.95

SOUTH AFRICA'S WHITE liberals may detest apartheid, but not enough. Suggestions that they are working to establish a democratic system should not be taken too seriously. They are identified with Big Business and the idea that Big Business wants to see apartheid destroyed in favour of majority rule is laughable.

The idea has gained currency through events like the meeting in Senegal this year between white liberals and South Africa's liberation movement, the ANC. Gavin Relly, chairman of the Anglo-American Corporation, led a delegation of white liberal captains of industry to a similar meeting in Zambia two years ago; straight afterwards he went to Canberra, where he declared that President Botha was being misunderstood by the world and that the ANC was simplistic in believing that all blacks were the same: the blacks really constituted many groups which did not want to be 'swamped by universal suffrage'.

Big Business in South Africa is dominated by the Oppenheimer empire of Anglo-America/De Beers. *South Africa Inc.* highlights the remarkable extent to which this is true. From mining to chemicals, construction, transport, banking and insurance, Anglo controls key companies or formulates company policy from a minority share-holding position — a technique which helps to disguise the South African connection in many British and other multinationals.

A former South African Prime Minister, Dr D.F. Malan, once said that 'Oppenheimer with his millions exercises a greater influence than, I think, any man in South Africa has ever had'. Thirty years later, this assessment still holds. The Oppenheimer conglomerate is run by a small inner circle which meets in Johannesburg twice a week. Ultimate control rests with 'a small private company', E. Oppenheimer & Son, which may, according to the authors of *South Africa Inc*, be worth billions. It certainly is secretive: inter-directorships and holdings between the various parts of the empire have been made almost impossible to disentangle.

The Anglo/De Beers influence extends to London, New York and other major markets. It is of course dominant in some of South Africa's neighbours. The tale of how Botswana's economy became 'virtually an Anglo fiefdom' serves as an interesting background to De Beers' purchase of Botswana's entire diamond stock earlier this year. Control of the international diamond trade puts De Beers in a unique position: its huge stockpile in London represents a South African foreign exchange reserve which only De Beers can value. Diamonds are worth what De Beers says they are; its sales of uncut stones in the first *half* of 1987 amounted to $1.56 billion.

The recent miners' strike in South Africa, the biggest in South African history, illustrates the reality behind Anglo's liberal image. In the beginning management pointed with paternalistic pride to the evolution in industrial relations which permitted strikes. Later, as the well-armed mine security forces attacked the striking miners, the chairman of Anglo's gold division, Peter Gush, said that the use of the police would be 'infinitely worse' than the use of the mine security force. The same day, Anglo called in the police, who used tear gas and shot the strikers.

By the end of August Anglo had dismissed thousands of 'rebellious' miners, replacing many of them with labour recruited in nearby reservoirs like Lesotho. As in the past, the use of migrant labour — which is officially deplored by Anglo as a necessity forced on it by government policy — helped to break the strike and secure a more compliant workforce.

South Africa Inc. provides a good insight into this as well as into other aspects of Anglo policy. It records a rare exchange of views last year between Cyril Ramaphosa, secretary-general of the National Union of Mineworkers, and Harry Oppenheimer, now retired but still active. Ramaphosa remarked that 'all you hear the mining industry barons say is that they are hamstrung by the law. Big business has been breaking innumerable laws to make big profits, but they have avoided breaking unjust laws that would help destroy the migrant labour system'. Oppenheimer replied to what he called Ramaphosa's 'touching speech' by saying that the union leader had got it wrong, because 'in some sections, anyhow in private enterprise, he has powerful potential allies in his battle against racial discrimination'. The Oppenheimers, one feels, dislike apartheid because it gives capitalism a bad name. □

PHOTOGRAPHY

Signs of power

Liz Heron

Photography/Politics: Two
ed. PATRICIA HOLLAND, JO SPENCE & SIMON WATNEY *Comedia/Methuen* £12.95

IN 1980, THE PUBLICATION of *Photography/Politics: One* was something of an event on the cultural left. Its varied testimonies to the growth of critical theory and practice encompassed race, class, sexual politics and disability. Bypassing the standard linear histories of photographic achievement, it unearthed a wealth of documentation on the Worker Photographer Movements of Europe in the inter-war years. It promised to be an annual; rashly, it turned out, for volume two has only just appeared.

Partly because it was so long in the making, this sequel can't stand quite so readily as a register of current preoccupations, but some indicative differences between then and now do emerge. Where accounts of collective and community projects filled much of volume one, here 'Practice' speaks largely of individual work on less overtly combative fronts. The notable exception is a treatment, by Faction Films, for a television film (subsequently made and transmitted) investigating the diverse picturings of Derry — in the local press, as a focus of events in international photojournalism, in community photography and local history.

Beyond that specific Northern Ireland context, Lorraine Leeson and Peter Dunn's discussion of their longstanding partnership supplies the only direct continuity with the campaigning and consciousness-raising of the '70s. It's significant that their last billboard montages formed part of a larger GLC offensive against the plans of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Yet there are also signs here of how the critical practice of photography is not only surviving, but thriving, whether it's at classroom level with the simple pinhole camera, or in a video project like Sarah McCarthy's 'Autobiographies': a complex exploration of class and adolescent femininity as these are constructed across dominant photographic genres and styles. This is art practice made accessible to a wide educational audience. At a less formal level in education comes Anne Krisman's wryly modest account of how photographing her pupils helps her as a stress-worn classroom teacher: 'I suppose it is an exercise in awareness.'

Yet, for a book intimately concerned with the meanings of photographs, it betrays surprising lapses of care over reproduction detail and captioning. Several pieces would have benefited from more rigorous editing; long-delayed publication, coupled with a concern to span a certain agenda, no doubt accounts for the uneven quality of the writing. With so much fascinating material here, the editors could easily have been more selective.

If practice has necessarily made a shift towards

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the personal and the interrogative, tentatively digging at the cracks between ideological certainties, so too has the study and discussion of images and some of the most suggestive writing here falls into that category. Personal experience and anecdote fuel analysis in a dialogue between Ros Coward and Jo Spence on representations of the body around childbirth and breast cancer and how these relate to questions of medical knowledge and control. I particularly liked Stuart Hood's nicely oblique commentary on three WWII photographs and their oscillations of personality — memories which lead him into a series of observations on warfare and male sexuality.

This is one of several pieces in a section on 'War' which stirs fresh insights into militarism and masculinity. Paul Wombell's research on the use of official war photographs during WWI reflects on the crucial historical connection between modern warfare and photography's regulatory function in civilian life, and how this coincides with the beginnings of a photo-journalistic democratisation of classes. He notes the importance of archival sources in enabling us to make sense of officially constructed iconography and its deliberate absences. Elsewhere, Alan Sekula discusses the ways in which an archive can be appropriated and misread, cautioning against any notion of inherent neutrality in the passage into history.

Together with these, David Green's study of photography's role in the methodology of late 19th-century eugenics points to the enormous significance of photography in shaping systems of thought and ideas of history.

The relationship, then, between photography and reality is more complex and intricate than simply depicting or distorting pre-given social experience. But to damn sociology wholesale, to assert the primacy of semiology as the key to understanding the ideological meanings of photographic representations, as Simon Watney does in the book's concluding article, surely underestimates the complexities of history, of *actual* social experience, and of real power relations, however intangibly these might be expressed.

Power indeed is everywhere, hard to isolate in the labyrinthine networks of global consumer capitalism, but it exists beyond its representations, even though its exercise may often (but by no means always) depend on them. To adopt a self-enclosing system of analysis and understanding implies an assumption that knowledge has reached an historical impasse. The politics of accommodation and retreat, currently so much in evidence, is grounded in that dismal assumption.

Implicit throughout Jo Spence's essay on the importance of John Heartfield is a disquiet with the political limitations of such pure deconstructionism. The fact that her worries are so tentatively put seems a measure of the tyrannical orthodoxy that it has established in a section of the cultural left: 'Even though ideology may be a system of representations, political power still depends, in the final analysis, on who controls the repressive apparatuses of the state . . . you cannot separate them out from one another, though sometimes one is more hidden than the other.' We have never needed to understand that more. □

CRIME

Improper women

Melissa Benn

Flowers in Hell: An Investigation into Women and Crime
BARNEY BARDSLEY *Pandora* £5.95
Women, Crime and Criminal Justice
ALLISON MORRIS *Basil Blackwell* £25 & £7.95

BARNEY BARDSLEY'S book represents the best of a tradition of feminist journalism — one that goes back to the *Time and Tide* journal of the suffrage era — welded to the politics of the 'new' radical feminism of the 1970s. Central to this strand of feminism is a wilful refusal by writer or activist to deny her own subjectivity, to separate herself from other women, to assume an authorial (but unacknowledged) 'I' dissecting an observed and distant 'them'.

Such refusals are particularly crucial to any book on criminal women, where the temptation to create a distance is more than ever strong. They also have important implications for the answers to the double-headed question: why do women commit crime? and less crime than men?

These are the two main questions raised in Allison Morris' book, where she treats them in a bibliographical rather than theoretical way, giving a thorough review of the literature on crime and criminals that, while rightly critical of the brutal biologisms of some traditional criminology and of the *History Man* complacencies of the new left (idealist *and* realist), contains far too little argument of her own, let alone passion.

Barney Bardsley, however, is always right there in her writing — chatting, really — and always deliberating on the wider question of what it is to find a true 'self' as a woman in this world. So that when she, rather schematically, gives five reasons why women commit crime she is also talking about women's rebellions and survivals *in general*. Women commit crime, she says, for money, from anger, for success, for kicks and out of need. And she articulates her own attempts to balance explanations based on necessity (i.e. women are poor/desperate) with a too easily romantic view of crime. There may be something exciting, exemplary even, about a woman who uses her brain, her imagination and sheer nerve to steal from the big banks through cheque fraud rather than live off some man, but there is nothing typical about this kind of women's crime.

Barney Bardsley does not limit her explanations to that of women's motivation alone. She is also keenly aware of the state power, and state racism in particular, that mediates a woman's actions and the consequences of those actions. Factors such as race, education, literacy and articulacy — as much as class origin alone — and the extent to which a woman conforms to notions of appropriate womanhood will greatly influence, if not decide, the outcome of her entanglement with law. Such notions of the 'appropriate woman', the pressures of feminine conformity — these ideas are at the heart of any meaningful understanding of women's crime and criminalisation.

Criminological study after study continues to show how much the police, the courts and the prisons exercise discretion according to bland and rigid masculine prejudice. It is the (mostly male) representatives of those establishments who use their power to decide whether the women before them live and love and talk and respond to them as a woman 'should'. And the exercise of this discretion also acts as an informal process of policing of the boundaries of a proper femininity which affects all of us. Which might, in turn, explain why women do commit so much less crime than men, and are less stroppy once in prison. For the older I get the more I realise just how hard it is for women to *keep on* breaching the ideologies of an accepted femininity — which, like so much ideology, is everywhere and yet strangely nowhere: in the downturned eye, in the disappointed expectation of someone you actually love, as much as in the abstraction of the book or the coldness of the courtroom.

The increased hedging that can come for women as they get older might also explain why some of the most fearsome and violent of criminal women are young: wildly active and reactive before the timidities of age and varying forms of learned helplessness set in.

As Allison Morris points out, these arguments about femininity/conformity provide an explanation, too, of women's *victimisation* in crime: the idea that only bad girls get raped, that women collude in all sorts of violence against them through stepping outside the invisible but definitely marked boundary lines of that proper femaleness I talked about above. Such arguments are now dangerously influencing much of the debate about women's safety, and their need to be 'good' in keeping it that way, as well as continuing to feed into the debate on women who commit crimes, and their badness in getting that way. □

The psychiatric nursing course

Anne Rouse

Only nine of us, you'd think we could be friends.
Despite summer, the extravagant green, the lens
Shows us stilettoed by our small worries:
That the course is hard, that our tutors ignore us.
We sip and talk, aria, duet, chorus,
Finale of failure, though exams haven't happened yet.
Wondering if we'll miss each other, thinking we'll forget.
Even our pet hates look like luxury.
Back on the wards they're clearing after tea,

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PAPERBACKS

Suet and swimsuits

Iain Sinclair

PAPER-WRAPPERS bombarded with approving quotes conceal the wetbacks of the literary world. These flashy re-treads are tolerated in the laager of the Books Pages on condition that they are dealt with as a single entity, a congealed porridge wriggling with worms. The standard gambit is to dangle an innocuous generalisation and nip in behind it with three titles by the close of the first para. A format I am desperate enough to accept.

See the word 'updated' on the cover and be warned that you are getting yesterday's journalism in book form. Barrie Penrose and Simon Freeman in **Conspiracy of Silence: The Secret Life of Anthony Blunt** (Grafton, £3.95) lead us from their portentous title through 649 fact-larded pages printed on medium-strength blotting paper into an inky labyrinth of double-dealing, snobbery, buggery and cold suet pudding. Prep school values adapting effortlessly to the world vision of the Homintern.

Remember that scene in the Bond movie where a gondola-sized limo is crushed and impacted into a portable block? That's what you get here. The black hole version of a mile of 'heavyweight' (i.e. long) Sunday journalism.

Great material for blocked novelists and other scissors-and-paste merchants. Everything you don't need to know about A. Blunt, who remains sheathed and invisible. Potted histories of Dadaism or the Spanish Civil War don't really help. But it's a ripping yarn to skip through, with a lovely foetid mix of dodgy art attributions, sailor boys, pylon poets, the Windsor collection and Cambridge hypocrisy as a Fine Art. Re-visit all those well-loved extras: Guy Burgess as an open invitation to some ham to make his reputation going over the top, or Goronwy Rees, yet another reptilian Welshman burrowing, Tudor-style, into the Establishment (ours or theirs is uncertain).

Grafton strikes while the Wright-stuff is still in the fan. It's all part of a Ministry of Disinformation ploy to bore us to death with the whole business so that they can go back to their little games undisturbed.

The other Burgess, Anthony, is a rogue in exile; he apparently never sleeps. His novella, **The Pianoplayers** (Arrow, £2.50), padded out with lists of old songs and greasy meals, is the product of a caffeine-raw weekend.

A series of knockabout routines plays with the sex/music metaphor. The author is obviously more interested in music than sex and gives us several pages of it. He rehearses the Mancunian pub material for the autobiography. He does an *Entertainer*-flavoured Blackpool playlet, and rounds it all off with a gross mother-in-law joke that is not quite worthy of Les Dawson. The style is replete with knowing asides designed to demonstrate the innate inferiority of the characters to their creator.

Philip K. Dick, in stark contrast, writes beautifully about mother-in-laws. **Puttering About in a Small Land** (Paladin, £3.95) is a book of enormous tact and authority, whose readers are given room to make their own way into a landscape fractured with tension. Post-war Los Angeles is revealed through the adultery of failing automobiles, the nervous vision of an empire of TV repairmen.

Another West Coast star, Ken Kesey, made the mistake of producing one of the icons of his time with his first shot, *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*. Now in **The Demon Box** (Methuen, £3.95) he is forced to become the foreground of his own fiction: a bold and ballsy survivor of the Chemical War. His work has a posthumous tone, but he's not going to quit. He doesn't do Neal Cassady as well as Jack Kerouac did, but then neither did Neal Cassady.

If Kesey re-cycles *Rolling Stone*, Joan Didion does the captions for *Vogue*: top-dollar technician. Her prose is flavoursome and camera-ready, spitefully angled. **Democracy** (Pavanne, £2.95) covers the Ross Thomas end of the waterfront; the shrinking Pacific of the American world dream. The queasy aesthetics of pink sunsets over Bomb-tested coral atolls.

A pale romance lurks under the speedy surface of CIA power-brokers and real estate bandits. Didion hits on bland politicos edgy for photo-opportunities. Her own eye for 'word-opportunities' is unmatched.

It's fast and it's readable. But it disappears like the wet ring of a cocktail glass on a marble table.

From the same stable (blue covers to contrast with Virago green) comes Magda Sweetland's **The Connoisseur** (Pavanne, £2.95). This is the Calvinist-approved version of *Lolita*, with a hero who is one of the biggest creeps even in the annals of Edinburgh fiction. He deals in porcelain. A man so delicate in his sensibilities that he turns down a sure-fire sale because he doesn't like the aura of the prospective punters. And who, at the climax of this sorry tale, chucks a figurine that has Sotheby's drooling out of the window because he's having a bit of a moody.

This man is so dim it takes him 150 pages longer than the rest of us to realise he's fixated on the young bud next door who is always hitching her swimsuit over the curve of her buttocks as she climbs wetly on to his sailing-boat. Canny readers will have pressed the eject button at first sight of the word 'pellucid'.

If *The Connoisseur* was a *Morning Story* waiting to be embalmed then Joan Lingard's **Reasonable Doubts** (Pavanne, £2.95) is a promiscuous invitation to be optioned as a TV mini-series, already shaped and edited into conveniently screenable episodes. The Mistress, an upwardly (& horizontally) mobile barrister, who is also one of the boys . . . the abandoned Spouse with her collection of battered wives . . . the nutty Sister . . . the Loser himself, with demented ambitions to open yet another antiquarian bookshop specialising in Latvian maritime history . . .

'As they came together, the phone rang.' Read beyond that if you must, but don't say you haven't been warned. □

Iain Sinclair's new novel, White Chappell: Scarlet Tracings *(Goldmark, £12.50) was reviewed in* NS *4 September.*

FANTASY

Kicking the hobbit

Kim Newman

Wizardry and Wild Romance
MICHAEL MOORCOCK *Gollancz* £10.95

SUBTITLED 'A Study of Epic Fantasy', this rather scrappy overview of a by no means easily defined genre reads less like a definitive history, or even a concentrated monograph, than the notes for a series of six interesting but undisciplined lectures around, rather than on, the subject at hand. In his introduction, which is dated August 1977 and December 1985, Moorcock admits that parts of this essay have already appeared in

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various forms as early as 1963 and scattered to the four winds thereafter. The result is a fascinating, entertaining, contradictory, opinionated, sometimes reticent piece of work, a little too dependent on choice chunks of the books under discussion to make its points than is perhaps seemly, and not terribly useful to either the novice or the advanced student in the field.

The book begins like a genuine history of the form with a look at its origins, deftly discounting the *Nibelungenlied, La Chanson de Roland, Le Morte d'Arthur* and the like and zeroing in on 'that body of prose fiction distinguished from myth, legend and folklore by its definite authorship and because it does not genuinely purport to be a true account of historical or religious events'. Then he gets into the true antecedents of *Lord of the Rings* and *Conan the Barbarian*, the 16th-century chivalric romances *Amadis of Gaul* and *Palmerin de Ingelaterra*, and confidently makes an illogical leap into the 18th- and 19th-century Gothic novel, which certainly contains elements of mediaevalism and knightly romance (the pure-hearted superheroes of Mrs Radcliffe) but is surely much more concerned with darker business (ghosts, ghouls, madness and misanthropy) derived from continental horror. This confusion — which has admittedly been abetted by many fantasy/horror writers — persists in Moorcock's discussion of H.P. Lovecraft as an inadequate fantasy writer, when he is, of course, a major horror writer.

After straying from chronology and the logical course of the genre, Moorcock jumps straight into overambitious sketches of important themes in short chapters dealing with 'The Exotic Landscape', 'The Heroes and Heroines' and 'Wit and Humour', which seem mainly to string together representative quotations from authors as varied as Zane Grey, Edgar Allan (diappointingly misprinted as Allen yet again) Poe, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert Holdstock, Robert E. Howard, M. John Harrison (one of the few single authors actually to get a reasonably in-depth career overview), and Fritz Leiber. It's a shame that Moorcock has nobly and modestly excluded himself from the line-up because the ramblings of these chapters make a lot more sense in the light of the decisions that the author has taken in writing his own important fantasy fiction. Given Moorcock's account of the conventions as he understands them, we can perhaps now have fresh insight into the way he has abided by them, broken them and, most importantly, shaped and changed them.

The grumpy heart of the book — previously published as a pamphlet by the British Fantasy Society — is Chapter Five, 'Epic Pooh', a long-overdue brilliantly-argued and indisputably perceptive hatchet job on *Lord of the Rings*, the giant which single-handedly cleared the market for the widespread commercial acceptance of fantasy fiction. Moorock works in some sideswipes at C.S. Lewis and A.A. Milne and hands a few plaudits to E. Nesbit and L. Frank Baum (such a preponderance of initials), but mainly he takes J.R.R. Tolkien to task for his lack of humour, his middle-class rusticism, his refusal to deal credibly with his villains ('After all, anyone who hates hobbits can't be all bad') and the deadening cosiness of his particular fantastic imagination.

However, it seems significant that Tolkien's strengths aren't discussed, either in relation to his own work or to the field as a whole. Surely *Lord of the Rings* — not to mention *The Hobbit* (which Moorcock doesn't) — succeeds primarily as a story, incorporating such archetypal narrative

SHELF LIFE

FOR SOME reason — as one of Salinger's own whimsical characters would probably say — the most *comforting* sign from the world of books came last week in Hungary, where I saw a young woman on a train smiling as she read a translation of *Franny and Zooey*. Window displays in Hungary suggested that *Adrian Mole*, everything by Graham Greene and Paul Theroux's *Old Patagonian Express* were also popular, or at least permissible — as was the copy of *Melody Maker* I brought along, pre-censored in the West by IPC.

Later, on the old Pannonian express at the Romanian border, *Imperator* Ceausescu's iron guards took a break from looting the bags of East European travellers to make a fuss about my proof copy of Alan Brien's new novel *Lenin* (Secker, £11.95). Protesting, in lesson three *Teach Yourself Romanian* (Hodder, £4.50), that it was merely 'one big fiction' only made matters worse. No Western fiction at all in Romania as far as I could see, but, with no meat, coffee, cigarettes, chocolate, petrol, contraception or abortion, erratic electricity and a daily bread ration of 300 grams when it's available, Jeffrey Archer can wait.

Back in the land of disconnected information and concentrated ownership of its sources, it takes a while to catch up on which publishers have bought which, although, as Murdoch ups his control of the media's integrated circuits by another 13.5 per cent, the picture gradually gets clearer. Soon there will simply be News International authors (editors, journalists, critics) and International Thomson authors. Meanwhile, there are still the independents, the mavericks, like Naim Attalah, chairman of the Namara Group which encompasses little more than *Literary Review*, The Women's Press, *Wire* magazine and Quartet. Quartet, as we've mentioned before in this column, publishes Attalah's magnum opus on *Women* later this month. Review copies come complete with a stern warning that they have been sent 'on the strict understanding that, due to contractual obligations, no review of, or material from, the book will appear before 18 October'. What this means is that Quartet has sold first serial rights to Murdoch's *Times*.

The legality of the warning is about as doubtful as the wisdom of feminists like Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson and Jill Tweedie (among the 289 'successful' women interviewed) in participating in such a superficial and overblown project. But with a promotion budget of £50,000 Attalah can afford to put a few literary editors' backs up. I wonder if *Literary Review* will trash it? *Wire* magazine, incidentally, is about to lose one of its staff — and one of the best music journalists in town — to *City Limits*. Texan Cynthia Rose becomes editor next month and will hopefully last a lot longer than her one-day predecessor.

'It should have become abundantly clear in recent years that the function of criticism, for the most part, is to serve as a more or less sophisticated public relations or promotional apparatus.' A punchy beginning to the summer issue of the media studies quarterly *Screen* (£3.95) in an essay by Abigail Solomon Godeau, 'Critical Practices in the Age of Supply-Side Aesthetics'. And a punchy ending — a letter from *Screen*'s Australian distributor André Frankovits announcing that, with national sales there now averaging less than 50 an issue, he's packing it in. 'Parochial, repetitive, punishing, grim', he calls the journal. And there's worse. '*Screen* doesn't sell in the shops because it has no sense of itself as a commodity. *Screen* has no feel for commodity fetishism. *Screen* has no sass. "Theory" of almost any sort is now a basic item of consumption for the thinking yuppie . . . The American publication *Zone* is pretty much the standard attractive product in this context. [next to it] *Screen* looks terrible.' I still think *Screen* looks and reads better than most, but then I haven't been to Sydney. For real sass here, though, you have to turn to the Imperial War Museum's lavishly beautiful *Review* (No 2, £5.95; they should call it *War Zone*), which includes fascinating essays on the ILP contingent in the Spanish Civil War and on Britain's response to the success of German newsreels in WWII. I particularly enjoyed Caroline Reed's essay on air-dropped propaganda leaflets (first used in WWI; most recently in the Falklands; 34 million dropped on Normandy alone before D-Day). She identifies several common themes, including: self preservation (tales of the joys of life as a prisoner); attacks on the luxurious, promiscuous lives of 'leaders'; divide-and-conquer attacks on allies; nostalgia, a longing for home; images of disease and death. With smaller print runs, such themes can now be promulgated via newsagents.

Also successful at the better kind of commodity fetishism are Redstone Press, whose boxed set of two Frans Masereel woodcut-novels is so chic that I even saw it among the flying jackets and bakelite wirelesses in the window of American Retro. They've now followed up with another Masereel, *Passionate Journey* (£10.95) and, later this month, *Listen!*, a boxed and illustrated selection of Mayakovsky's early poems translated by Maria Enzensberger (£7.95). They also design *Screen*.

Equally attractive, from Atlas Press (10 Park St, London SE1), is a new anthology on *Raymond Roussel*. For a mere £5.50 you get essays by Breton, Leiris, Butor, Robbe-Grillet, Sciascia *et al*, chronology, bibliography, glossy gold cover *and* a photo of the eccentric genius's dog, Pipo, smoking a pipe. It is possible to be a *sincere* promotional apparatus, and sometimes publishers buy ads afterwards.

Malcolm Imrie

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strategies as the quest, the battle of good and evil and the picaresque progression through a variety of astonishing and unusually-populated locales. *Wizardry and Wild Romance* prides itself on having only one plot synopsis (of *Amadis of Gaul*, which no one is likely to have read), but it should be taken to task for not considering the most obvious quality of the genre, its narrative drive. This does a disservice to the elegantly hardboiled capers of Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and Grey Mouser stories, the labyrinthine gothic construction of Mervyn Peake (the plotting of Gormenghast mimics its architecture), the obsessional questing of the heroes of everything from Tolkien through Robert E. Howard's Conan stories to Holdstock's tour-de-force *Mythago Wood*, and the delicate mix of tragic and comic mechanisms which keep T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* and Alan Garner's adult juveniles on the road to their individualist apocalypses.

One would complain about the skimpy treatment given such important newcomers as Geoff Ryman, Colin Greenland, Tim Powers, Gwyneth Jones, Mary Gentle, Iain Banks or Viido Polikarpus and Tappan King, but much the same fate — mentioned in passing, accorded a token quote or omitted entirely — befalls such established figures as John Masefield, Jonathan Carroll, J.M. Barrie, Lewis Carroll, Diana Wynne Jones, John M. Ford, Philip Jose Farmer, Ursula Le Guin, Harlan Ellison, T.H. White, John Crowley, Keith Roberts and John Cowper Powys (dismissed as an 'allegorist'). Although Moorcock might complain that he never intended a definitive, in-depth exhaustion of his subject, he does point out the lack of critical works on it (he could only find Lin Carter's wholly inadequate *Imaginary Lands*) and, given his ability to produce big, thick, dense novels, it would seem that he hasn't even the excuse of laziness to give for his failure to address the subject he sets himself. □

FIRST NOVELS

In old bottles

Roz Kaveney

SOMETIMES, WHAT COMES OUT cleanest and sharpest is more or less the same old stuff we thought that we had tired of and were rid of for good. Robert Inman's **Home Fires Burning** (Michael Joseph, £10.95) is an utterly traditional novel which might have been written in any decade of the four since the one in which it is set.

It is set in the Southern USA and takes the racism of the '40s so totally for granted that it hardly mentions it; it discusses the acting out of male fantasies of integrity with the briefest of acknowledgements to the women who pay for these fantasies; it is spiritually time-warped to a quite amazing extent. Yet Inman has the capacity to make us feel pain and pleasure through the personae of his stubborn bully of a newspaper editor and the editor's hallucinating grandson. The old man's picking over a disappointing life and the boy's fantasies of Civil War glory never become tiresome, always have that crispness and precision of imagined reality that keep us turning the pages of the novel — because it is only in those pages that we are going to know them better and find out more.

Inman's sense of small-town life in the last months of WWII is less precise; his pictures of the town's wiseacres arguing over breakfast about a war memorial, or ducking a buzzing training plane, have a little too much of the forced about them, of the obligatory comic turn. The relationship of grandson and editor to their father and son, the returned heroic wastrel Henry, has a tad too much melodrama to it; and the editor's long-suffering wife is too much the plaster saint. On balance, though, Inman convinces us, for the duration, of the reality of a couple of lives, and to that extent he has learned his job.

Hans Christoph Buch is not terribly concerned to convince us of the reality of anything; indeed, he is almost certainly prepared, at the drop of Derrida's hat, to lecture us on the dubious political consequences of believing in anything that might be *called* reality. He convinces us of little save his own cleverness; luckily, there is enough of that to do.

The Wedding at Port Au Prince (Faber, £10.95) is a set of variations on the themes of racism and imperialism as exposed in the course of the history of Haiti. Whatever Buch's private political convictions, he plays with his material with the heartlessness and devotion to its potential artistic content alone that one would expect from a composer rather than a novelist. As he moves from the interpreted historical narrative of Napoleon's original betrayal of black emancipation and the consequent bloodbath, through to the documents concerning the sending of a 19th-century Prussian gunboat, through to anecdotes of the involvement of members of his family in the political movements of the '30s and '40s, he throws into doubt the whole nature of narrative and documentation. Few of us know enough to know whether this is how all this happened — we are forced to believe it because he is telling us the tale rather than because of the different styles in which he presents us with the evidence. And, when he throws in a Cayman narrator, odd bits of voodoo and occasional tropes from pornography, we have to accept those too. The narrator, like the ruler of Haiti, tends to be a dictator.

One of the reasons that we learn to trust narrators is their style; one of the joys of novel-reading is discovering how many styles there are that will seduce us into belief. In **Mojo Hand** (Serpent's Tail, £5.95) J.J. Phillips sets out to use the diction of the blues to write about the making of a blues singer and finds a mode of narrative eloquence that seduces us as thoroughly as the 12-bar lovetalk of Blacksnake Brown seduces her heroine. This is the first British issue of a little-known 1966 novel but its compromise between a minority culture and the mainstream, its refusal to be limited by either one — or, indeed, by the act of compromise — is as timely as it ever was. As a light-skinned black woman, prepared to acquire the blues by the magic act of sleeping with the bluesman, Eunice is caught up in the prurient fantasies of both racial communities, but the novel allows her the freedom of at least knowing what she is buying and selling. It is time that Phillips broke her silence again.

Most novels about the making of crucial decisions lack the full-blooded antinomian existentialism of a Eunice. There are moments in Russell McRae's **Going to the Dogs** (Macmillan, £9.95) when the decisions of the charming Billy are sympathetically, in terms of our view of protagonist and author, and productively, in terms of narrative tension, affected by Billy's intermittent awareness that even the hip have responsibilities.

McRae is a teacher and his portrait of a youth making what look from a conventional standpoint like the wrong choices is saved from the preachiness of the case history by the sheer virulence of McRae's, and Billy's, hatred of parents. There is a scathing, comic brutality here, at odds with the novel's appearance of sweet reason: when showing us how Billy's sister is driven to suicide, or how the conference over Billy's girlfriend's pregnancy is turned into an exercise in public humiliation, McRae forgets his worthy views about Modern Youth and goes for the jugular instead. And once or twice, just once or twice, Billy and his Poppy start to wonder about class and ideology, rather than explaining their parents' ghastliness moralistically.

At its occasional best, Anne Spillard's **The Cartomancer** (Hamish Hamilton, £10.95) has an unfocused unease which derives from its feckless, card-reading heroine and her capacity, as fortune-teller and writer of text, to impose her desires, conscious and unconscious, on the more decided academic folk around her. May drifts through friendships and affairs, listening and fabulating and claiming that whatever disasters occur just came off in her hands or fell from the back of a lorry.

Between May's delusions and her misunderstandings and her downright porkies, Spillard leaves us with a final uncertainty as to the nature of the other figures in this solipsistic landscape — which stops us caring as much as we might — but, as is appropriate in a novel about compelling magic, she has a dangerous degree of charm. We have been here before, too, but she confuses us until we almost forget it. □

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No stillness, no peace

Harry Barker, Parktown, Johannesburg, S. Africa

Maritz Vandenberg (Letters 11 September) criticises Phillip van Niekerk's prophesy that South Africa could become a wasteland filled with refugees and corpses and says that she has never seen a country less aptly described. Had she attended the recent Summit Conference on Unemployment in Durban, called by the managing director of one of South Africa's largest companies, she would have learned that even the government-inclined University of Pretoria estimates the total of unemployed in the *Republic* (leaving 'homelands' out of account) at 2,500,000 out of a total of 10,500,000 workers: that is 24 per cent.

There are informed estimates from other universities much higher than this: Dr Ronald Bethlehem, economic consultant to the vast Johannesburg Consolidated Investment group, estimated a potential 10,000,000 unemployed by the year 2000 if sanctions continue. Pretoria University found that 28 per cent of the economically active population of Soweto were unemployed: and the figures for the poverty-stricken 'homelands' are worse.

'Operation Hunger', which feeds millions of starving people here, found from a survey of rural areas conducted by a group which included Professor Frances d'Souza of Oxford University, that malnutrition in those areas was worse than that in many other regions in Southern Africa, including Botswana, Swaziland, Zambia, Mauritius and Zimbabwe: 48.5 per cent of children were malnourished in Transvaal, 57.7 per cent in Eastern Cape, and 80 per cent in Northern Cape, where 27 per cent of the population were said to be wholly destitute and dependent on charity.

But what even more suggests a potential wasteland is the effect on millions of black children, who are raised in conditions which positively promote a loss of the sense of right and wrong because violence is often necessary for survival. Poverty, insecurity, migrant labour, shack housing, squatter camps, states of emergency, military occupation of townships and even schools, detentions without trial, police exemption from legal restraints, 'Bantu' education in stark contrast to 'white', and lack of protective laws, may (as Professor Francis Wilson and Dr Mamphele Ramphela point out in a recent report) create a generation of 'Khmer Rouge' children; and if they do, then the wasteland may indeed result.

One wonders what parts of this 'very largely prosperous, orderly and enviably dynamic country' Ms Vandenberg visited. Surely not the Ciskei, Transkei, Northern Cape, Lebowa, Vendaland or even Kyalitsha? Was she influenced by censored news and the conditions prevailing in the sort of affluent white suburb from which I pen this letter? A place of trees and stillness and peace, while just out of sight beyond the enclosing hill there is the army, no stillness and no peace.

Nasty jokes

Paul Barnett, Exeter

I was intrigued to read Ian Williams' account (*NS* 25 September) of the meeting addressed by Ramsey Campbell and Clive Barker at this year's world science-fiction convention, since I was one of the people at that meeting.

Mr Williams says that Campbell and Barker were there 'to talk about their trade'. In fact, neither of them did any such thing. Campbell, who is a very good writer, acted as straight guy to Barker, who told such excruciatingly funny jokes as 'Why do you wrap a dead baby in cling-film? — So that it doesn't burst when you fuck it'. As to the art of horror writing, if indeed it is an art, there was nothing.

Critics of sex and violence in the media might do well to read Barker's 'acclaimed' novel *The Damnation Game*. Mixed in with necrophilia, sadistic child murder (little girls, of course), cannibalism of children and so on is an extremely well written and very explicit erotic scene. This is a book which is openly on sale to children, who will presumably come away with the message that sexual turn-ons are related to sadism of the vilest kind. Need I mention that Barker has just signed a contract worth half a million pounds to produce more of this dangerous crap?

Public words, private deeds

Vivienne Lukey, Former Chair, Council Member, 1977-87; Peter Oakley, Former Chair, Programme Sub-Committee, Council Member 1983-87; Richard Sumray, Former Vice-Chair, Council Member 1977-86, War on Want

Stuart Weir describes George Galloway speaking movingly of the need for reconciliation (*NS* 2 October) and invoking a discussion he had had the night before with an unnamed politician from Central America who warned of the dangers of comrades tearing themselves apart. Nowhere is the contradiction between words and deeds more evident. The unnamed politician, in fact an ex-Minister from Grenada, did not get elected to the Council of Management because he was not on George Galloway's slate. At the end of the debate following his speech, despite pleas from many people, including the ex-Minister, George Galloway and his supporters demanded that a vote be taken condeming ten members of the Council of Management for writing an open letter.

So much for reconciliation.

The stark difference between public words and private deeds has been at the centre of the problems of War on Want for the past two years. For many of us, seeing well-controlled machine politics, constant destructive manipulation, autocratic management (indeed mis-management) and intimidation of many people (particularly women) take over from a more open style of management with freedom to make one's views known without pressure and above all concern with War on Want's work in the Third World, has been a bitter experience. For many of the staff with years of expertise working with and campaigning for groups in the Third World the effects have been devastating. They did not speak out until the AGM in order to protect War on Want and its work; they were also intimidated and threatened into silence, for their jobs and therefore livelihoods were at stake. Some had abuse hurled upon them. That they managed to continue their work of channelling aid to groups in Asia, Africa and Central America, and campaigning on issues such as debt, is a tribute to their hard work and dedication.

The issues within War on Want finally came to a head in September 1986 when it emerged that the General Secretary had claimed over the previous year about £20,000 in expenses rising to an average of £520 per week. Many of us, after hearing the nature of some of the claims, believed it was essential that an enquiry should be held. It was agreed against bitter opposition from George Galloway and his supporters. The AGM was told that the results of the enquiry indicated that financial controls were neither well defined nor stringent enough, but that there was no corruption. It was also stated at the AGM that some money had been paid back to War on Want by George Galloway. Who, though, should be setting definitions of expenses and who should be setting an example to the rest of the staff? Clearly it has to be the General Secretary. For an organisation like War on Want, which is dependent on donations from the general public who believe their money is being channelled to projects in the Third World, is it not essential that the enquiry is made public? Not according to George Galloway and his supporters; we urge them again to publish it.

The election of George Galloway's slate to the Council of Management has meant the loss of several members with a great deal of experience of project work in the Third World. It is these people who have been the backbone of War on Want for some years and have done most of the work on the Council. Machine politics has resulted in the election of people who, with the exception of a couple of members, have little experience. The staff will, therefore, have scant support in much of the work they do.

We must now look to the future. Although we are no longer involved in the Council of Management we wish War on Want well. It is an important organisation for those of us on the left who want to see radical policies relating to the Third World promoted effectively. For this to happen it is important that George Galloway adheres to the promise he made to staff recently and stands down from his new role on the Council of Management. Only if he does so can

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we hope then that the intimidation will stop and the staff, including those who were brave enough to speak at the AGM, can be supported rather than vilified. We hope also that the new Council of Management appreciates the need for real reconciliation and unity of purpose, so that War on Want can again speak out in this country on behalf of the oppressed in the Third World.

Home ownership – a right not a privilege

Matthew Huntbach, Young Liberals National Executive

Nick Raynsford (*NS* 25 September) ought to be aware that previous attempts at land taxation have failed precisely because they have attempted to be, in his words, 'carefully graded'. A modestly-waged homeowner sitting on a valuable patch of land has the wealth to pay a uniform land value tax in the form of land itself; thus the option should be open to postpone payment until the capital in the land is realised when the homeowner sells or dies.

It is owner-occupiers' own children who suffer from house price rises, facing huge mortgage bills as first-time buyers at just the time when their finances are most stretched. Yet it is these same people who are the principal beneficiaries through inheritance, which with today's lifespan is likely to take place at just the time when the mortgage is paid off and the children leaving home, when it is least needed. Taxation of housing capital gains ought to be put in terms of correcting this maldistribution of resources rather than pure envy. But the real emphasis should be on the consequent reduction in income tax. Surely most people's regular income is more important to them than a once or twice in a lifetime windfall.

The left has for too long assumed the public sector will be the main means of fulfilling housing need. It has thereby neglected the sort of changes required to make home ownership a right not a privilege.

Toughing it out with the *NS*

Alex McLeod, London SE26

Couldn't David Owen have written your editorial (*NS* 25 September)? I read it three times; I'm sure he would have substituted 'social democracy' for 'socialism' in the last sentence, but otherwise he would have agreed with everything you wrote. I challenge you to submit it to David Owen and see what he says.

I'm not happy about the *New Statesman* becoming an Owenite journal. Your readers must have had more than enough of letters which begin: 'I have read the *New Statesman* since 1939 . . .' Tough for them. I'm another. But I'm not giving it up. I've seen it through bad patches before. I'd be a bit happier, though, as I pay out my £1, if I thought we had an editor who wanted a Labour government next time.

Help from gay readers

Stephen Bourne Year 3, c/o School of Film and Video, London College of Printing, Elephant and Castle, London SE1 6SB

I am a film student at the London College of Printing researching a short video for my final year around the experiences of gay men in Britain between 1957 (the year of the Wolfenden Report) and 1967 (when homosexuality was partially decriminalised).

I would be very grateful to any gay readers of *New Statesman* who can take the trouble to write to me about their lives at that time.

I would also appreciate it if readers can recall seeing the 1961 film *Victim* (starring Dirk Bogarde) on its initial release in Britain, and write to me about their reactions to the film. Do you think the film was accurate in its representation of the lives of gay men then?

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The **Field Co-ordinator** will administer the programme, assess requests for technical assistance and provide in-country back-up for the project workers.

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The contract is initially for two years with salary in relation to local costs.

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Recruitment Administrator, UNAIS,
3 Whitehall Court, London, SW1A 2EL. Tel: 01-930 0679

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ENGINEERS' AND MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION

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The successful applicant will need to be numerate, aware of current affairs and capable of analysing information and producing high quality briefing material on a wide variety of subjects. These can include pay, the economy, industrial relations and energy policy. In addition, there will be responsibility for maintaining our comprehensive press cutting service.

Written applications – by not later than 20 October 1987 – to:

John Homer, Administration Manager, EMA, Station House, Fox Lane North, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 9HW.

This is a readvertisement. Previous applicants will be contacted.

NUPE
Britains Caring Union

Education Assistant

A vacancy has arisen for an Education Assistant in our Education Section at Head Office.

The successful applicant will be responsible to the Education Officer and will prepare written and visual education material and assist in the organisation of our education programme.

Applicants should have experience in organising and teaching within the trade union movement. A knowledge of video production and the use of video in education and campaigning would be of distinct advantage.

The current salary for the post is on the scale £11,890.23 to £13,188.23 per annum, inclusive of a London Weighting allowance.

NUPE is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage applications from women and men from all sections of the community irrespective of their sex, race, ethnic origin, colour, sexual orientation, marital status, disability or religion.

Application forms may be obtained by writing on a postcard to: Maureen Underwood, National Union of Public Employees, 20 Grand Depot Road, London SE18 6SF, to whom they should be returned by **27 October 1987.**

Please mark your postcard "Education Assistant."

NUPE

society
of civil & public servants

"OPINION", the monthly journal (newspaper) of the Society of Civil and Public Servants, a trade union representing 86,000 members in the Civil Service and other public bodies, has a vacancy for an

EDITOR

The successful candidate will play a key role in the union's internal communications and in articulating the policies of the union and the views of its membership including the editing and production of a regular bulletin for Branch Officers and Shop Stewards. Applicants should possess a wide range of editorial skills and be able to demonstrate a personal commitment to trade unionism. The salary for the post is £16,716 per annum, inclusive of London Weighting. The annual leave allowance is 30 days. Relocation expenses available.

Applications should be addressed to the

The General Secretary,
Society of Civil and Public Servants,
124/130 Southwark Street, London SE1 0TU

and should contain full details of journalistic, editorial experience (together with examples of work), trade union experience, together with names of two referees and a daytime telephone number for contact purposes.

Applications to be received by Friday 23 October 1987.

The Society has recently conducted a wide-ranging review of its communications and will be devoting additional resources including staffing to this vital area of activity. Therefore this is a unique opportunity to join the staff of a progressive trade union in the forefront of the campaign to maintain jobs and public services.

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BACKCHAT

INFRA DIG

Torch light

Diana Eden

IT WAS BESOTTED LOVE and admiration for my neighbour, the smashing actor Jerome Willis, which led me, last week, out my kitchen, down the endless Mile End Road and towards that famed and doughty Mecca, the Theatre Royal at Stratford East.

My pilgrimage was in no way prompted — and here's a disturbing fact — by a burning awareness of the issues of the play in which Jerry was appearing. However, as those issues turned out to be most disturbing, I shall eagerly distribute some of them to you.

Vince Foxall's meaty *Pork Pies* (you've missed it, by the way; it's three-week sprint has been run) is that rare dramatic bird: theatre which opens a current can of worms without succumbing to either indulgence or polemic. The Hero (and seldom can a capital letter have been more deserved) is Ron Walker, a real-life copper now on 'sick pay' from the Kentish Police while investigations are underway into his documented allegations of 'creative bookings' within his force.

Walker insists that the massive crime clear-up rate enjoyed by Kent has been achieved by bartering false confessions from known criminals in exchange for dropped or scaled-down charges. Thus the police obligingly give the public what they want (reassuringly solvent, solved statistics at a stunning success rate of 75 per cent) and co-operative lags get shorter sentences or even get to stagger out, wide-eyed at their fortune, readily agreeing to piss off and piss on someone else's patch.

One of the evening's triumphs is that of *really* bad guys there are none. Foxall, who spoke long and deep with Walker, has portrayed the police as I suspect they mostly are: variously ambitious, disaffected, principled, unscrupulous, corruptible and corrupting. Here we see not one-dimensional pigs-in-uniform but, much more convincingly, worrying and complex, just a bunch of opportunistic cynics on the beat.

Several medals *should* be struck but, as they won't be, I shall nonetheless award them. Medals, then, for Foxall, for the director Geoff Teare and his faultless cast of eight and a medal, certainly, for Philip Hedley, guv'nor of the Theatre Royal. Hedley was gripped some months ago by the *Observer*'s account of Walker's tale and — outraged when no other horny hand picked up his torch in the relay race for justice and exposure — commissioned Foxall's play. It is a shaming indictment of television drama and documentary that only the embattled, underfunded Theatre Royal (a Cinderella sitting at the hearth-side of the country's second poorest borough) has been willing to risk prosecution and life's other little aggravations in the course of carrying out its duties.

Above all, a medal for Ron Walker, who has pulled a professional and personal temple down around his head. Whatever the eventual outcome of the official investigation, Walker's one-man mission will, inevitably, scupper his career and former friendships — for is any outcast so eternally cast out as an internally whistle-blowing bobby?

Pork Pies is a magnificent and question-raising play. And it leaves me appealling for assistance with the following two enquiries. When will the farcical tradition of the police policing the police be replaced by a confidence-evoking, independent body? And which television company will put its budget where its breast-beating is, write out a zonking cheque to the courageous Theatre Royal and bring *Pork Pies* to the attention of the nation's complacent parlours? □

'Isn't it amazing — as soon as you're told not to touch something you just can't resist!'

FIRST PERSON

Locks and chains

Jane Dibblin

THE TIME HAS COME to praise the police. In the last five years attitudes — and consequently practice — around rape and violence against women have at last started to change. Catalysts in this have been the women's movement, notably Rape Crisis Centres, and some sections of the media. In a few areas, like Newcastle-upon-Tyne, special rape units staffed mainly by women doctors and police have been set up, with input from Rape Crisis.

Positive Steps, the video launched in August by the Metropolitan Police, is another manifestation of this change. Its aim appears to be twofold: to advise women on how to make their lives safer and to encourage more women to report attacks on them. The Met is hoping for a wide audience, with women's organisations and firms with female employees asked to show it.

'Every woman has the right to be safe; we ought to be able to go wherever we want to . . .' begins the video. Jenny, an off-duty police officer declares, 'Nothing is going to stop me from going out and enjoying myself,' and towards the end a male Detective Inspector tells a rape survivor: 'It's not your fault. You mustn't feel guilty. You have the right to say no at any stage.' A far cry from the police at the time of the Yorkshire Ripper telling women they should simply stay indoors.

On her way to the cinema Jenny remarks that taking care of yourself is like driving — you need to plan ahead. And so — window locks and door chains; never be embarrassed to examine a man's identity card before letting him in; when going

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home alone at night walk near other women . . . The narrator stresses that attacks can take place at any time, and anywhere, including your own home. (Rape by a lover or trusted friend is not mentioned, however — and the women shown are all white, middle-class and able-bodied.)

But for all its good intentions the video should carry a warning: This May Be Very Painful For Women: It Should Be Followed By A Discussion, Preferably With A Trained Counsellor.

I found the scene where the rape survivor is taken seriously by the police, where she breaks down and is told not to blame herself, to be more deeply disturbing than some of the worst cinematic depictions of rape. In part, this is because the video is less packaged and therefore less distant than cinema: the acting is mostly ham and awkward and so more human; and right from the beginning we are invited to identify with the women.

More fundamentally, the scene reawakened my own feelings about having been raped and on another occasion foiling an attempted rape, precisely because, like the woman on the screen, I felt I must in some way be to blame; when I eventually confided in someone I was told not to go to the police as I would be treated as the criminal. Despite now understanding how women are made to blame themselves, despite attempts at exorcising residual feelings of anger and sadness, like an ungrieved death it still has the power to haunt.

A large number of the calls received by Rape Crisis Lines are from women who were raped years previously. In order to carry on living their lives many had buried the wound so deeply they blocked it from memory until some incident nudged their unconscious. This video, perhaps hastily shown in the lunch hour, may be just such an incident: why then does it not at at least publicise Rape Crisis phone numbers?

In the final sequence Jenny stops a man grabbing her handbag: it is our only glimpse at a woman fighting back — nowhere is it suggested that we can resist rape. Returning to the car analogy, dangerous situations occur no matter how careful you are. And yet there is always something you can do, even if you are old, disabled or small. It's virtually impossible to feel satisfied with your response — you're unlikely to be able to beat an attacker to pulp; talking your way out of a rape, or shouting loudly enough to unnerve him is nevertheless a powerful means of survival. Without this message the video is, finally, *dis*empowering.

While *Positive Steps* desperately tries to live up to its name, it hardly touches the circle of fear within which many women are trapped and which window locks and door chains cannot break. Some women may live all their lives without being attacked, but they haven't escaped unscathed if their lives are still debilitated by dread.

Stopping a would-be rapist from inviting himself in for coffee (as the rape survivor wishes she had) demands a fundamental shift among women, a greater assertiveness about our boundaries which includes being able to say no to men in power in *all* areas of our lives. The police are not about to take up that banner. I asked a friend who had pioneered self-defence for women how she would have made the video differently. Women from various backgrounds, of varying physical ability, talking about how they had survived attacks — and how they coped with the resulting feelings, was her reply. How about the Home Office funding women's groups to make that video? □

Positive Steps *is available from Cygnet Ltd, Bilton Centre Studios, Coronation Rd, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP12 3TA.*

FOOD

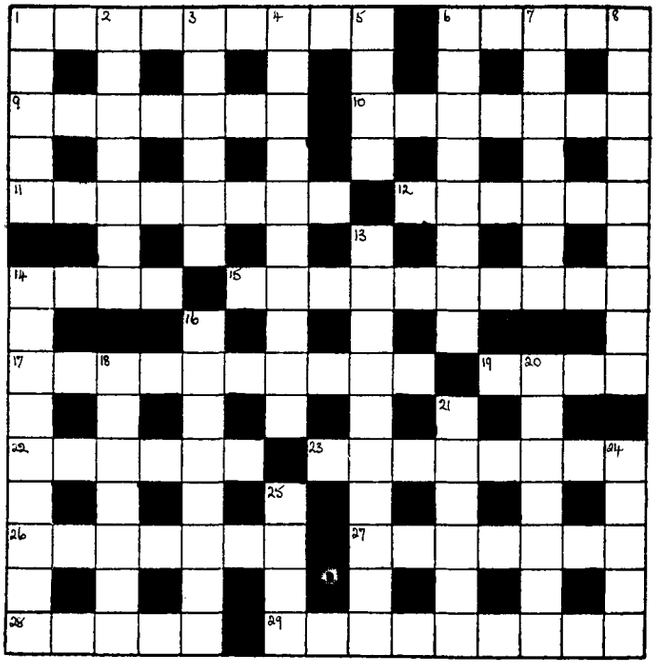
They also serve

Colin Spencer

ONE OF THE BEST Turkish restaurants in London is **Topkapi** in Marylebone High Street: a softly lit, long, narrow room. The food is reasonably priced and there are 15 *mezeler* (the

Weekend Crossword 1573

PRIZES: £3 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1573, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by first post 20 October.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

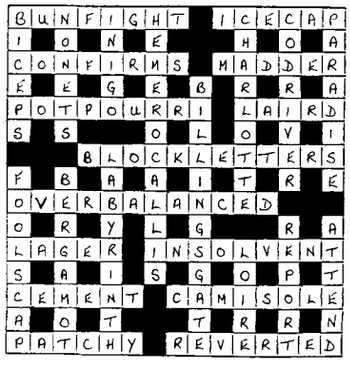
1. A friend with somewhere to eat provides what is delicious (9)
6. They supply water for about a thousand animals (5)
9. Reminder for me to embrace people (7)
10. Part of body hacked to pieces in a murder (7)
11. Experts in water sports, they do not go under (8)
12. Lust makes one look about in the same place (6)
14. Occasions for bewilderment, we hear (4)
15. Liberal who occupies a dreary morning with an unfinished part of the agenda (10)
17. Weapon of words broadcast by batsman (10)
19. Conversation with an animal in a foreign language (4)
22. Not uniform although it comes in where the sun eventually sets (6)
23. Journeys in which our spouses embrace us (8)
26. His is in a mess because of the drug (7)
27. Hangs with broken leg in shifting sand (7)
28. Tell by the sound it is an airport (5)
29. Ammunition given transport to the range (9)

DOWN

1. Animals which turn up with their mothers (5)
2. Animal which has to beat its victim (7)
3. Vehicles which do a hundred on petrol (6)
4. Japanese art in colour analysed (6,4)
5. The paradise of Oriental Studies? (4)
6. When a craftsman is after a penny he takes sides (8)
7. Drink which gives one skill in a car (7)
8. Possibly not solemn, just tired (9)
13. Botham, for example, gives everyone a bit of a game (10)
14. Comes out like a young lady with painful noises (9)
16. It is sticky for males to enter a disreputable place (8)
18. Concerned with what is for the bishop to supervise (7)
20. They are crowded together but Roy was in front (7)
21. He works in the garden right beside the fruit (6)
24. If she lost her head, I'd be in employment (5)
25. It is fashionable to leave Marx unfinished (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1571



Prizewinners to 1571

John Hammond (Plumtree, Notts.)
Mrs S. E. Watson (Hindhead, Surrey)
J. S. Hawker (Brighton)

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Turkish for *meze*), a herby *tabule, enginar* (which are artichoke hearts), haricot beans, vine leaves and the usual tarama and humus — all of high quality to be scooped up with warm pitta bread. Few Turkish restaurants bother about the vegetarian, but at Topkapi there is a vegetarian *plat du jour*. They also have a Topkapi Special, a secret recipe for Chicken Breast to celebrate their 1984 award from Capital Radio for being the restaurant of the year.

For the carnivore there are plenty of meat dishes: cubes of marinated lamb, kebabs and roasts, including a popular doner and shish kofta served with a hot sauce and herby yoghourt. Bread, pickles and onions come with a 50p. cover charge, but avoid the glass of Perrier water at a quid a time. If you do, you can eat well for a tenner; or, if you stick to the *mezeler*, for £9 for a set meal including dessert.

Sidi Bou Said is a Tunisian restaurant just behind Marble Arch which has been open for five years. Now, you can't get a lot smarter than this area, but the restaurant is tiny and unlicensed and appears in no eating guide at all, not even the marvellously comprehensive *Eating Out in London* published by *Time Out* magazine. When you read the following account you may think that the reason for its omission is obvious. But here is the tale of the Bou Said.

We had booked, but there was no record. The small room, decorated with water colours and a bird cage stuffed with corks, was full. A table, however, was at last arranged and we waited for the food (which, I am thankful to say, is cooked to order). One salad of carrots and cucumber in a hot pepper dressing was brought. We fell on it with great hunger and, having finished, waited for the rest.

They had forgotten. We reminded them and eventually something came: an envelope of deep-fried, thin pastry which enclosed an egg and parsley, accompanied by a Mechouia salad of grilled peppers, tomatoes, onion and garlic, finely chopped in a chilli dressing. We waited another hour for the main course.

They had forgotten again.

We reminded them and waited for what seemed like another hour and, at last, it arrived: couscous with vegetables, lamb, chicken and fish. It was amazingly good; the grainy couscous costing only a fiver had plenty of hot spiced tomato sauce over it and the fish, meat and vegetables could be dipped into *harissa*, the very fiery paste made from pimentos, garlic, coriander and caraway. It is certainly worth a visit, and cheap, but the service is bizarre to the point of being amateur — our simple dinner lasted four hours.

Odette's, situated in the cul de sac of Regents Park Road beside Primrose Hill, is always crowded, even on a Monday night. No wonder, for it is a charming restaurant, having a garden with a large sky-light and a main room of Edwardian affluence: oil paintings, gilt mirrors and palms. The waiters all look as if they've stepped out of a painting by James Pryde or William Orpen and the service is attentive but discreet.

John Armstrong is the chef and his food falls into that interesting category of Anglo-French with international influences: an English fillet of beef with ginger, or a French chicken stuffed with a chive mousseline, or a classic French gigot with flageolets sit side by side on the menu with a Scottish inspired fillet of cod in oatmeal but served with a lobster sauce. I ate tremendously well, starting with a salad of fresh garden vegetables which was a small miracle of tiny carrots, minute turnips and baby corn mixed with leaves like lambs lettuce, Chinese mustard greens, radicchio and chicory. I was intrigued to see a consommé made from smoked quail and a fruit soup of strawberries, oranges, water melon and pink grapefruit. The wine list is extensive with some good clarets. The price of a meal is around £17 but worth every penny.

The Suffolk area around the Aldeburgh Festival has tended to be a culinary desert for hungry music lovers. Many of the more interesting restaurants refuse to stay open late at night so eating dinner after a concert has been impossible. Peter Hill and Sara Fox have changed this rule: the **Regatta** in Aldeburgh has been open for three months and has been packed from the beginning. It is being put into the Aldeburgh Festival mailing list for late dinners.

The food, unfortunately, does not come up to the expectations of the decor or the long wine list. Mushrooms fried in garlic butter were poor on the garlic. My grilled avocado had frozen prawns (here, where you can buy fresh from the beach or get them from Lowestoft), was in a floury, unseasoned sauce and had been baked at too high a temperature so that the avocado was cooked and had begun to grow bitter. The grilled Dover sole, if sadly hampered for room by too many spuds on the plate, was at least local, but the salad was English traditional, damp hothouse lettuce at its dullest. The homemade peach ice cream was too feeble in flavour and so loaded with ice crystals that it needed Barry McGuighan to smash it. There is much room for improvement — but, at the moment, with a captive clientele, the owners seem too flushed with success to want to try. □

Topkapi, 25 Marylebone High Street, London W1; tel: 01-486 1872/935 3188.
Sidi Bou Said Restaurant, 9 Seymour Place, Marble Arch, London W1; tel: 01-402 9930.
Odette's, 130 Regent's Park Road, London NW1; tel: 01-586 5486/8766.
Regatta, 171 High Street, Aldeburgh, Suffolk; tel: 072-885 2011.

'I sentence you to three months on the rooftop of Her Majesty's prison . . .'

Weekend competition

No 2996 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

The Ladybirdisation of Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* suggests that similar treatment may be meted out to other classics. Extracts, please, from the Ladybird version of *Pride and Prejudice, War and Peace, 1984, Ulysses*, etc. Max. 120 words by 21 October.

No 2993 **Set by Russell Lucas**

Credible recipes in haiku form.

Report **By Ms de Meaner**

Few of you, it has to be said, strayed very far from the nursery — boiled eggs with soldiers, shepherd's pie and porridge were among the most popular dishes — but oh! what exquisite results you produced. Should anyone again try to argue with me that content is more important than form, I shall simply show them the entries below and rest my case on their beauty. What I *shan't* show them is the picture sent by Bill Turner. Imagine a dark green tablecloth, photographed from above, in the centre of which is a white china plate piled high with steak, peanuts, rice, mushrooms and *women-shaped chips*. Bill, did you actually purchase those things, or (my sal volatile, quick) could it be that you made them *yourself*? The only point to be put in your defence is that the accompanying haiku possessed the necessary syllables and lines (whereas Alison Flood is clearly still having problems counting on her fingers). To those hereunder who have tugged at my taste buds, a round five pounds per head.

Onions and minced beef,
Braise well, then top with mash. Brown.
Ah, the aroma!

KATIE MALLETT

Leave bread under grill
Till you see first puff of smoke;
Scrape briskly with knife.

KEITH NORMAN

In boiling water
Cook a cup of oats, and eat
Hot with salt, not cream.

D. A. PRINCE

Whisked eggs meet foaming
Butter: Look! in the pan's night
A yellow half-moon.

PETER NORMAN

Prawns, herbs, hard-boiled eggs
Chopped up, double-cream, served warm;
Oh, cholesterol!

MONICA G. RIBON

Bits of wine-soaked bread
Dipped in beaten egg and fried.
Add cream and sugar.

WAYNE SIDESADDLE

Dip glacé cherries
Into melted chocolate
And roll in chopped nuts.

CATHERINE BENSON

On a split muffin
Place grilled ham steaks, then poached eggs.
Drench with Hollandaise.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Put missionary
In pot and boil till tender.
Serve with care and grace.

JOHN SWEETMAN

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Take me to your Leader
by Moann' Minnie
The Department of Environment has been infiltrated by Ridloids
MINISTER...?
YES, RIDDLES?
THERE IS CONCERTED INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ON US TO CURTAIL THE USE OF AEROSOLS, MINISTER, BECAUSE OF ALLEGED DANGER TO THE OZONE LAYER
WE MUST DO NOTHING TO DISCOURAGE THE AEROSOL INDUSTRY, RIDDLES
Report
Ozone Layer
BUT WITH RESPECT, MINISTER, WE HAVE TO BE SEEN TO APPEAR CONCERNED FOR THE FATE OF THE PLANET
OH FIND A WAY, RIDDLES — A VAGUE STATEMENT AN EMPTY GESTURE..
YES MINISTER
Report
JOHN MINNION
HANDS OFF THE OZONE LAYER
9.10

Chess

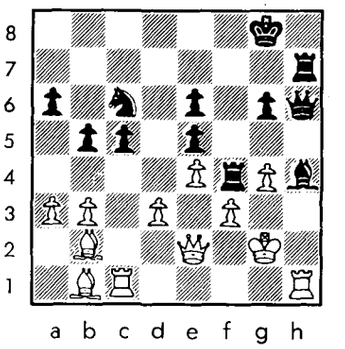
HOW CAN A practical player cope with the information-explosion in chess? Every year there are more tournaments, more games, more opening innovations, more bulletins and books to mug up on. But most people will find that time is limited and only so much brain-space can be allocated to the game. So one must be selective. Above all this means tailoring the opening repertoire so that there are plenty of things that you can afford to ignore. With a few bold cuts you can make enormous economies of time and effort. For example, years ago I made a resolution to abstain from playing the Sicilian Defence (**1. e4 c5**) as either Black or White, a decision that has enabled me to let the dust gather on thousands of game-scores.

Yet the Sicilian is so popular, surely I must be missing something? If nothing else, there is always the chance of celebrity-through-citation status that a sparkling victory in the Sicilian can bring. For it is not only GM Sicilian-bashers like Keres, Tal and Nunn who can achieve a sort of immortality. Consider Ostapenko. And who on earth is Ostapenko? Really, I know nothing about him, but nearly 20 years ago now he played one inspired game that has permanently linked the names of victor and victim. In tournament chess parlance an 'Ostapenko-Zhartsev' is a real working over in the Sicilian, as per the original:

Ostapenko-Zhartsev, USSR 1969. Sicilian Defence.
1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 d6 6. Bc4 e6 7. Be3 Be7 8. Qe2 0-0 9. 0-0-0 a6 10. Bb3 Qc7 11. Rhg1 b5 12. g4 b4!? The position is obviously double-edged with White attacking on the K-side and Black on the Q-side. 12 . . . b4!? allows, indeed practically forces, a dangerous tactic and yet it may be all right (see move 15). But Black's results have not been bad after 12 . . . Na5! 13. g5 Nxb3 + 14. axb3 Nd7 and on the whole this would seem a more reliable continuation. **13. Nxc6 Qxc6 14. Nd5! exd5 15. g5 dxe4?** This is the real mistake — allowing the g-file to be opened. After 15 . . . Nxe4! 16. Bxd5 Qa4 17. Bxa8 (or 17. Bxe4 Be6! 18. Bxa8 Rxa8) Nc3 18. bxc3 Be6 Black is behind in material, but ahead in attack. That is the sort of position that the Sicilian-player has to analyse in depth. **16. gxf6 Bxf6 17. Bd5 Qa4 18. Qh5!** Ostapenko goes for the full treatment. White can try for a win by grabbing the Rook: 18. Bxa8 Be6 19. Bd4! Bxd4 20. Rxd4 Qxa2 21. Rg3 etc., which has also been played. That way lay total anonymity. **Be6 19. Rxg7 + ! Bxg7 20. Rg1 Rfc8** Unless he makes f8 available for his King he will be mated very swiftly — e.g. 20 . . . Bxd5 21. Qg5 or 20 . . . Kh8 21. Rxg7 Kxg7 22. Qg5 + Kh8 23. Bd4 + (or 23. Qf6 + and Bh6). **21. Rxg7 + ! Kxg7 22. Qh6 + Kg8 23. Bxe4 b3.** Black has many other tries that fail in slightly different ways here, including the counter-sacrifice 23 . . . Qxc2 + 23. Bxc2 Bf5, which loses to 24. Bd4. **24. Bxh7 + Kh8 25. Bf5 + Kg8 26. Qh7 + Kf8 27. Bh6 + Ke8 28. Qg8 + Ke7 29. Bg5 + Kd7 30. Qxf7 + Kc6 31. Bxe6 Kb6** Even at this late stage that indefatigable analyst Boleslavsky tried to save Black's cause with the suggestion 31 . . . Qe4. I'm not sure whether this should be called an 'improvement'. It would prolong the game, but after 32. Qd7 + Kb6 33. Be3 + Ka5 34. Bxb3 White surely stands to win in a rather enjoyable way. **32. Be3 + Ka5 33. Bxc8 Rxc8 34. Qf5 + Rc5 35. Bxc5 Qb5 36. Bb4 + Kxb4 37. a3 + Kc4 38. Qxb5 + axb5 39. cxb3 + Kd3 40. Kd1 1-0.**

Looking into the new edition of *How to Play the Sicilian Defence* (Batsford) by David Levy and Kevin O'Connell, I hoped it could be recommended as an example of the modern synthesis in opening theory, combining strategic explanation with a fund of game-examples. So it can, but there is danger if you overlook any of the variations and I notice that in giving this game Levy and O'Connell don't mention 15 . . . Nxe4! White could be set up for a nasty shock if he gets the impression that 12 . . . b4 was clearly a mistake.

Last week's position [16/4p3/4p3/4P3/4Rpk1/2K5/8] Peckover, 1957: **1. Rd3! Kg2 2. Rd2 + f2 3. Kd3! Kg1 4. Rd1 + f1 = Q 5. Ke3! Qxd1** stalemate, or 5 . . . Kg2 6. Rxf1 Kxf1 7. Kf3 and draws. I took this position from the authoritative *Comprehensive Chess Endings Vol.5: Rook Endings* (Pergamon) by Averbakh and Kopayev. For this week, a typically vigorous finish from Chigorin. Black to play and win.



George Botterill

This England

£3 Book Tokens for entries printed. (Postcards please.)

☐ West Berkshire Health Authority, which last week approved a £1.3 million package of cuts to prevent overspending this year, has told staff 'to dress in keeping with the winter weather' so that heating may be kept to the minimum legal temperature of 61°F. — *The Times* (Leonard Cox)

☐ The Ayatollah Khomeini is now registered as a prospective shareholder in the forthcoming BP flotation. He joins Queen Victoria, President Reagan and a galaxy of other famous names phoned in on share registration lines by late night punters lacking anything better to do. — *The Independent* (Colin Pritchard)

☐ Emergency measures had to be taken yesterday when a van being used to launch a car tax campaign by police and the Department of Transport in Cwmbran, Gwent, was found without a tax disc. The van carried a large placard with the slogan: 'Check that your vehicle is taxed. Don't risk a heavy fine.' — *The Times* (Derek Morgan)

☐ A power station's safety record came a cropper when the station manager ordered the Central Electricity Board banner to be flown to mark 100 accident-free working days. As Mr Joseph Judd, a security guard, put up the flag at High Manham Power Station, a metal pulley wheel broke. It fell 20ft on to his head leaving him with a bruised skull. — *Daily Telegraph* (C. Wolmar)

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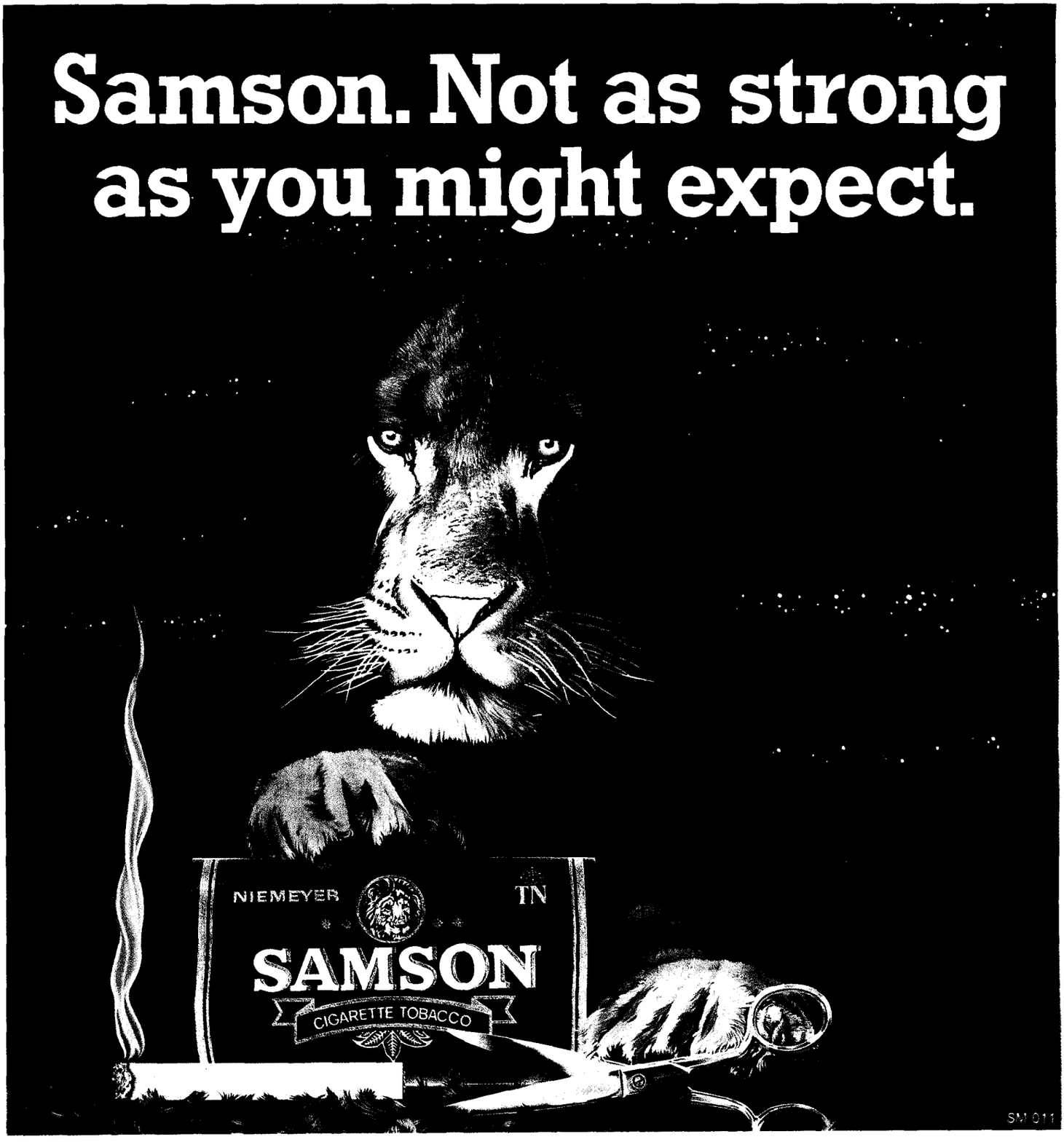

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Health Departments' Chief Medical Officers

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